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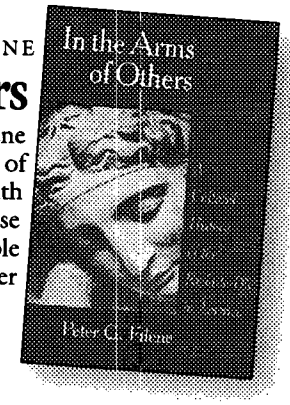

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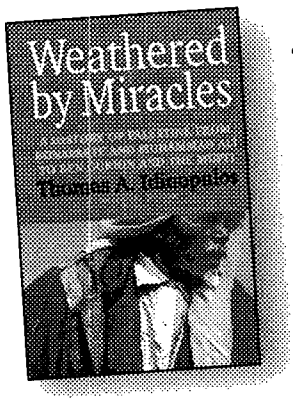

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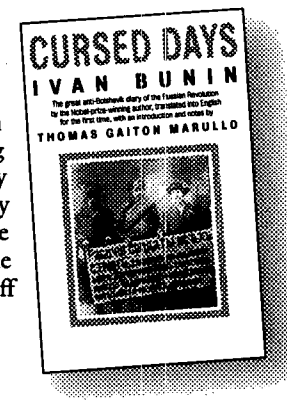

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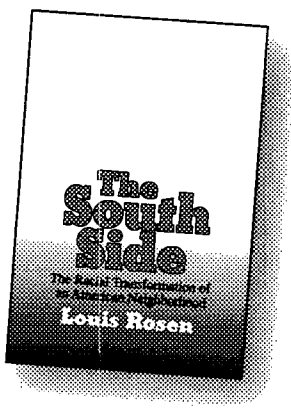

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Editor's Page

SHOULD "Americanization" take place by consent of the governed? The question was posed eight decades ago by a rebellious intellectual, Randolph Bourne. He was responding to polemics—both political and cultural—about "hyphenated-Americanism," roused by immigration but more broadly by a changing world. Those disputes anticipated today's arguments about multiculturalism. They also presaged an important democratic question for our times: can there be "globalization" by consent of the governed? ■ In this issue of *Dissent*, David Miller takes a critical look at some of the implications of the current process of "Europeanization." He makes a claim that is controversial for many in the European left: to turn from politics on a national level risks the left's basic purposes, namely, democracy and social justice. Miller acknowledges, however, that some major issues, like the environment, cannot be addressed within national confines. This last point dovetails with Ken Conca's reproach to the Clinton administration for "repackaging" environmental issues as "strategic" matters. A "security" definition of environmentalism, he argues, works against what is needed: cooperative globalism. ■ Cooperative globalism will be increasingly important for trade unions. Surely, this is one implication of the announced merger of Chrysler with Daimler-Benz. This transcontinental corporate marriage will also oblige expanded ties between America's United Auto Workers (now moving toward consolidation with our Steelworkers' and Machinists' unions) and Germany's IG Metall. A "globalizing" era presents new challenges to unions. Steve Fraser, in his important article on union democracy in America, notes that unions have always played multiple, sometimes incongruous roles. Democracy becomes a complex matter when you are sometimes a fighting organization (in strikes), sometimes a diplomatic corps (in negotiations), and at other times a vehicle for democratic mobilization. The left calls for democratic unionism as a vital element of social emancipation. The right, on the other hand, does so to undermine any balance of power between labor and the corporate world (which hardly functions democratically). It hastens to deregulate business, globally and within U.S. borders, but to regulate unions. ■ Fraser worries lest union elections replicate the worst in our general elections—the dominance of money, sound bites, personalities. This sort of politics reflects some distressing aspects of our culture; watch the evening news and see how much of it is devoted to celebrities or sensation or trivia and how much to, well, news. News has become, as Todd Gitlin remarks, whatever happens to "newsworthy" people. ■ The future left will have to think on many levels—global as well as national and local, cultural as well as political and economic. And it will have to address the mediations among these levels if it is to provide a persuasive voice on behalf of liberty, equality, and solidarity.

M.C.

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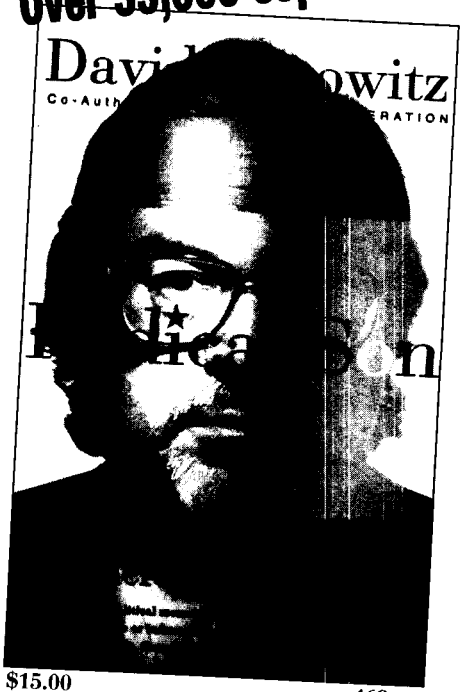

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Affirmative Action: Second Thoughts

Joanne Barkan

News from the affirmative action battle front: two members of the top brass have deserted the hard-line opposition. Nathan Glazer, who crusaded against affirmative action for more than two decades, has switched sides. Glenn Loury, who broke with the neoconservatives a few years ago, has reshaped his position. Both say that California's draconian Proposition 209 provoked their rethinking. Approved by voters in 1996, Proposition 209 bans all affirmative action in the state's public sector by outlawing any consideration of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in public employment, contracting, or education.

Glazer, professor emeritus of sociology and education at Harvard, and Loury, professor of economics at Boston University, agree that Proposition 209 goes too far. By prohibiting that group identity ever be taken into account, it transforms an absolutist version of the "color-blind principle" (perfect nondiscrimination) into law. Glazer and Loury disagree about almost everything else. They analyze affirmative action from different points of view; they arrive at different policy conclusions; they object to Proposition 209 for different reasons. At the heart of their disaccord—and everyone else's—is the ideal of a color-blind society.

Arguing affirmative action for thirty-five years, Americans have, in essence, been arguing over the value and reality of color blindness. On principle, we require a liberal democratic society to turn a blind eye to the race, color, religion, sex, and national origin of its members. Everyone receives equal treatment; everyone competes on the basis of individual merit. On principle, we also require a liberal democratic society to root out discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin.

The conflict between these two requirements arises when a "category" of people has suffered long-term, debilitating discrimination, such as 350 years of slavery and Jim Crow. When discrimination is no longer the law of the land, does the damage from past discrimination still get passed from generation to generation? If yes, then society must offer "special help" so that victims of past discrimination can eventually compete as individuals on merit alone. But special help to one group sabotages color blindness.

John Kennedy first used the term affirmative action in a 1961 executive order exhorting federal contractors to ensure nondiscrimination. In the second half of the decade, the term came to mean special help: outreach to victims of past discrimination, specialized training, and—most controversial—preferential treatment in hiring, job promotions, awarding of government contracts, and admission to institutions of higher education. Through the 1970s, beneficiaries came to include not only African Americans (the initial focus of concern) but also women, Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Alaskan native tribes.

Hard-line opponents consolidated their position around the absolutist version of color blindness (and its corollary—competition on the basis of merit alone). For them, discrimination against no one means special help for no one—end of discussion.

Some conservatives may have held to color-blind absolutism out of conviction. Early on, most used it to limit the gains of the black civil rights movement. Still others (including neoconservatives who cobbled together a political line in the 1970s and then shifted ever farther to the right) found absolutism perfectly suited to their larger agenda. A crusade against

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affirmative action dovetailed with opposition to welfare-state programs, activist government, and progressive taxation. A moral campaign bolstered their free-market economics. Wealth and privilege, they could argue, were nothing more than signs of merit. Public spending would never help blacks. If they couldn't compete successfully after Congress passed the Civil Rights Act in 1964, they weren't working hard enough or living clean.

Liberals and leftists supported affirmative action, meaning all forms of special help, including preferences. They constructed their position around society's obligation to help those damaged by discrimination. As Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun wrote in the 1978 case of *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, "In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race."

THE *BAKKE* decision sanctioned another principle (of sorts), diversity, which gave the entire dispute over color blindness a new twist. Diversity—women on the police force, blacks on the construction crew, Latinos on the college faculty—became more than real-life evidence that discrimination wasn't taking place. Diversity became a goal in itself: our institutions should reflect our diverse population—even when we can't blame a lack of diversity on discrimination.

Just as opponents of affirmative action include absolutists, supporters include hard-liners who turned affirmative action into a sacred cow. They're pretty quick to impugn the motives of anyone who worries aloud about the social divisiveness of group preferences or the effect on political coalitions or the effect on perceptions of achievement or the moral liability of "reverse discrimination" (visited upon those who lose out when someone else gets a special preference). A body can forfeit liberal or left credentials by worrying too much.

On principle, I like worriers. Nathan Glazer turned out to be one on the conservative absolutist side. Like everyone else, he saw that when Proposition 209 went into effect, the number of blacks admitted to the University of California's selective Berkeley campus plunged 57 percent; the drop was 43 percent at UCLA. Latino admissions fell 40 percent at Berkeley and 33 percent at UCLA. In 1996, a circuit court banned affirmative action at the University of Texas Law School; in 1997, the combined number of entering blacks and Mexican Americans sank by about 60 percent.

When Glazer realized that blacks might disappear from the nation's most selective colleges, universities, and professional schools, he swore off absolutism. "Are we willing, in the name of the principle of color-blindness, to accept this result . . . ?"

Glazer describes his conversion in the *New Republic* (January 27, 1997; April 6, 1998) and in a symposium on affirmative action in *Commentary* (March 1998).* This is a limited conversion. He supports preferences only for blacks and only when they apply to institutions of higher education. "Asians, apparently, can fend for themselves, and so, for the most part, can Latinos." As for women, "in academia the preference for women, now abetted by the women's movement, has become excessive . . . . " The social status of African Americans is, however, "the most enduring reproach to the egalitarian ideals of American society."

Glazer has several reasons for compromising the principle of color blindness:

> . . . the Harvards, the Berkeleys, and the Amhersts . . . have become, for better or worse, the gateways to prominence, privilege, wealth, and power in American society.
>
> . . . there is something behind the argument for diversity . . . . The presence of blacks, in classes in social studies and the humanities, immediately introduces another tone, another range of questions (often to the discomfort of black students who do not want this representational burden placed upon them).
>
> . . . this country has a special obligation to blacks that has not been fully discharged. . . .
>
> . . . strict application of the principle of qualification would send a message of despair to many blacks . . . .

Glazer's reasoning, explained many times over in his articles, doesn't cohere into a position that's politically or morally compelling.

First, on the gateways to success and on the message sent to blacks: everyone agrees

*I am quoting Glazer from these three articles.

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that higher education boosts the prospects of young people because it offers not just knowledge but networks; you meet "useful" people, you learn how to interact with them. Glazer is making just this point, but he emphasizes the most elite schools too much. If the improved message to blacks amounts to slots at "the Harvards," you're not saying, or doing, much. Glazer's elite, even with blacks added, is too small and too interested in self-perpetuation to provide the gateways. Shouldn't we open up more gateways, broader gateways, rather than reinforce the old bastions of privilege? Glazer sounds as though he's worried most about the reputation of these institutions; all-white Harvards will "look bad."

Second, on diversity: unfortunately, this notion is gaining popularity as a rationale and immediate goal for preferences in higher education. Conceptually, it puts the cart before the horse. Diversity naturally results when individuals, with their different inclinations and talents, have true equality of opportunity to pursue their goals. If 260 million people are competing fairly, you won't end up with all-white, all-male urban police forces, law partnerships, or Berkeleys. Affirmative action should help create the equal opportunity.

THERE'S ANOTHER objection to the diversity rationale, one that Glazer himself suggests. The idea that preferences will supply campuses with blacks who will typify "their" particular point of view rests on some odious assumptions: All blacks share the same point of view; all want to represent and communicate that point of view; all accept having group membership emphasized over individual identity. One wonders what the mixed-race student should do. Represent blacks during freshman year, Asians sophomore year? Or blacks in sociology class, Asians in history?

Finally, on the special obligation to blacks: most recent articles on higher education note the dropout rate at Berkeley, which is 42 percent for blacks and 16 percent for whites. No fact strikes me as more disheartening; it demands a response. Glazer says we should keep using a double standard in admission requirements for now. And beyond that? "In time, I am convinced, this preference will not be needed. Our laws and customs and our primary and secondary educational systems will fully incorporate black Americans into American society, as other disadvantaged groups have been incorporated."

How do we square this noble conviction with his opinion of public schools? "The decline [in the level of public services] has perhaps been clearest in central-city teaching, where the number of black and Hispanic teachers and administrators has increased." Does Glazer expect these schools to help incorporate blacks fully into society? I reread his articles, looking for a more positive evaluation. I found this: "we have been trying to improve education for decades, with some limited success." So perhaps, eventually, we'll be able to discharge fully our special obligation to blacks.

What bothers me in all this is the off-hand, and ultimately irresponsible, carelessness. As quoted by Steven A. Holmes in the *New York Times* (April 5, 1998), Glazer accounts for his conversion this way: "It's one thing to fight for a principle, which is a very good principle, especially if you don't expect it to win. Then, as you come close, the consequences become a little larger." In his first *New Republic* piece, he writes that, with California's Proposition 209, the complexities of affirmative action "suddenly emerged, like a genie from the bottle."

He didn't know that the moral universe is a messy place where our best and favorite principles collide? He never suspected that an absolutist position on one principle might compromise others? He, a sociologist, didn't know that many social scientists and university administrators had, for years, predicted a "white-out" with the end of affirmative action? Why does he think school officials bothered with the policy year after year if they didn't need it? His rethinking, at this point, sounds like noblesse oblige confusedly acknowledging a faux pas.

GLENN LOURY'S case is different. He began his work as a public intellectual by writing about color blindness as a dilemma in American society. According to economist Paul Krugman (*Slate*, May 14, 1998), the first few pages of Loury's 1976 doc-

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toral dissertation laid out the central quandary of race policy in this way: On the one hand, we want individuals to be judged by merit, not by race. On the other hand, a child growing up in the South Bronx and a child growing up in Scarsdale do not have the same chance in life even if they have equal talents and even if racial discrimination no longer exists. If society cares about the child in the Bronx, it must offer special help—help not offered to members of other groups.

Krugman bluntly states that Loury "has basically never been able to get off square one—because at no point over the past two decades has he been able to find allies who are even willing to accept the reality of the dilemma."

No one? At no point? Well, perhaps, because Loury also argued in 1976 that social problems internal to the African American community were stymieing black progress more than active white racism. Liberals, leftists, and the civil rights leadership judged him disloyal. He found a home among neoconservatives for about fifteen years. Both Krugman and Jim Sleeper (in his book *Liberal Racism*) tell the story of Loury's break with the right. In brief, the conservatives' complete indifference to poor urban blacks and their enthusiastic promotion of Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve* and Dinesh D'Souza's *The End of Racism* finally drove him away.

Loury describes his current position in the *Public Interest* (March 1997) and in the *Commentary* symposium to which Nathan Glazer also contributed. Loury traces his thinking back through the 1980s, when he demonstrated how low income resulting from low social capital (family connections, cultural milieu, and so on) gets transmitted from generation to generation. The disparities between blacks and whites, he still argues, could continue indefinitely unless blacks receive special help.

Loury has no trouble taking a stand against what he calls color-blind formalism:

> The color-blind principle, while consistent as a self-contained legal rule, is in my opinion neither morally nor politically coherent . . . . Indeed, since all anti-discrimination enforcement requires classifying, monitoring, and counting employees by race, the only fully consistent color-blind position is to advocate the repeal of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

LOURY STILL abhors (no verb could be too strong) race-based preferences, by which he means lower standards for blacks. He finds them pernicious in two ways. First, consider the case of any black who wins a job, contract, or school acceptance. Everyone not involved in the selection process can logically assume that the black *might* have benefited from lower standards. Everyone can also logically assume that any white who wins *might* do so despite reverse discrimination. Loury uses mathematical logic to demonstrate this reasoning; then he calculates the bottom line: "In practical terms . . . the outside reputations of most blacks will be lowered, and that of most whites enhanced . . . ."

Second, Loury argues that preferences can "undercut the incentive for blacks to develop their competitive abilities." Employers and teachers who believe that blacks can't meet the common standard might patronize them by setting lower standards of expected accomplishment. Blacks might then perform at a lower level, turning the expectation gap into a self-fulfilling prophesy.

Instead of "preferential affirmative action," Loury proposes "developmental affirmative action." He'd like to use public resources to break the inheritance pattern of social capital. For example, fewer black students go into science and math. Instead of lowering standards, we should fund summer workshops, curriculum development at historically black colleges, and research assistantships for promising black graduate students. New black-owned businesses would get management assistance so they could bid on government contracts competitively. Black students might get provisional admission to a state university with the stipulation that they spend one or two years at a local community college, raising their scores to competitive levels.

These are not color-blind programs:

> Such a targeted effort . . . involves allocating benefits to people on the basis of race. What distinguishes it from preferential hiring or ad-

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missions, though, is that it takes seriously the fact of differential performance and seeks to reverse it directly, rather than trying to hide from that fact by setting a different threshold of expectation for the performance of blacks.

For Loury, public efforts directed to poor urban blacks are "a matter of social ethics"; they are required by "widely embraced democratic ideals." Yet the college and business programs he mentions will not help "those languishing in the ghettos of America." He states this fact but fails to discuss what specifically will help poor urban blacks—even though he calls their plight "the most intractable aspect of the racial inequality problem today."

LOURY ANGUISHES over the black middle class's ongoing desire for preferences:

> It is morally unjustified—and to this African American, humiliating—that preferential treatment based on race should become institutionalized for those of us now enjoying all the advantages of middle-class life. The thought that my sons would come to see themselves as presumptively disadvantaged because of their race is unbearable to me.

Loury never states that he's altered his position on affirmative action—although pundits and his conservative critics certainly claim he has. In order to clarify the matter, I interviewed Loury by telephone this past May.

"My actual position hasn't changed," he told me, "but the emphasis has." In this post-Proposition 209 period, Loury emphasizes "the distinction between saying that affirmative action doesn't work sometimes and saying that it's never okay to take race into account." He maintained that he never advocated abolishing affirmative action completely, even during the time he was associated with the neoconservatives. In the past, he often argued "you can do harm" with race-based policies; he used words like "disincentives" and "crutch." He concluded: "Then, in public discourse, positioning takes place relative to others."

I asked Loury why—if his position hasn't changed—Norman Podhoretz (conservative editor-at-large of *Commentary*) wrote in the same symposium, "I for one preferred the old Glenn Loury to the new"? Loury speculated that "the old Glenn Loury could be relied on to say to blacks what they didn't want to hear. You could count on him to criticize liberals who were defending affirmative action." Loury added that his former neoconservative allies reacted negatively when he started talking more about "his people," his communal attachments. "That's the price of admission—don't wear your identity too heavily—although they don't hesitate to show their Jewish identification."

Podhoretz, of course, doesn't allude to these matters in his *Commentary* article, which he devotes exclusively to Loury's deviation on affirmative action. The article never mentions Nathan Glazer's defection. Let's put personal relations aside and consider this: could it be that Loury's position poses a more serious challenge to the conservative credo?

Podhoretz calls the new Loury "disingenuous" because "he embraced a program that sounded as good in theory as it had in 1965 but that nearly 35 years of experience should have taught us was inevitably subject to corruption in practice." Podhoretz slides over Loury's distinction between developmental and preferential affirmative action—the heart of Loury's position. Podhoretz might claim that developmental programs "inevitably" degenerate into preferential ones, but why—after thirty-five years of experience—must they? He offers no arguments, let alone convincing ones. He ignores the fact that a solid majority of all Americans supports special help as long as it doesn't involve double standards.

Podhoretz doesn't mention the implications of Loury's position that truly drive conservatives crazy: activist government, social programs, redirection of resources to the poor, and, eventually, more competitors on a more level playing field. I don't mean to paint Loury as a leftist. I only point out that "the public goal of raising the competitive abilities of disadvantaged blacks" through developmental affirmative action must involve some government intervention and redirection of resources.

As an alternative to double standards, Loury's idea initially appealed to me. Unfor-

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tunately, he doesn't answer basic questions about race-based programs for blacks. Who is black? Can you enroll in a program if you have just one black parent? one grandparent? Or does cultural heritage define identity? Must applicants attest to being brought up sufficiently black? If a program operates in a mixed black and Latino neighborhood, can poor Latinos enroll? If yes, are we shifting our criterion to low socioeconomic status? Have we then failed—once again—to attend to blacks' specific deficit in social capital?

Suppose policy makers could answer these questions. Suppose we could exchange our current double-standard policies for a complete program of well-designed and well-funded developmental affirmative action. I'd vote for the switch. I have, however, little hope and no confidence that we'll get such a program in the foreseeable future. For one thing, it would be expensive.

In this respect, the affirmative action predicament resembles the welfare dilemma. The old federal entitlement program was a misery: niggardly, demeaning, and self-perpetuating. Sensible people, including the vast majority of welfare recipients, would have preferred a fully-funded jobs program including general education, skills training, child care, health insurance, job placement in the private sector, and, when necessary, interim employment in the public sector at a living wage. Such a program would have cost a lot. We kept the old system for as long as we did because it was cheap. Now we don't have even that.

Preferential affirmative action is a flawed, weak, and cheap tool. Yet, with it, the black middle class continued to grow after 1973 when the postwar economic expansion ended; and some 58 percent of black students at Berkeley did graduate. I hesitate giving up what we have until I know we'll get something better. The job of like-minded sociologists and economists is to spell out the better policies. Then the rest of us can argue for them. ●

JOANNE BARKAN is a writer living in New York City.

Mark Levinson

The IMF in Asia

Its Solution is the Cause of the Crisis

THE COLLAPSE of the Asian economies was one of the great economic surprises of the last half-century. Countries recently celebrated as "economic tigers" are now recipients of a $121 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and are seen as the source of financial contagion or global deflation.

In Southeast Asia, where the Gross National Product of most countries grew between 6 percent and 10 percent annually from 1985 to 1995, the crisis stemmed from a development process sustained in recent years by huge infusions of foreign capital. Encouraged by the IMF, Western governments, and banks, the Asian governments facilitated the flow of foreign capital by removing or loosening controls on companies' foreign borrowings. This deregulation was not accompanied by a strengthening of bank supervision.

Asian businesses discovered that they could borrow abroad twice as cheaply as they could at home. Foreign debt escalated, most of it private and short term. And while the liberalized capital markets were the conduit for huge capital inflows when there was confidence in the country, they were also the means by which capital could flee at the slightest sign of trouble. In 1996, total private capital inflows to Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines were ninety-three billion dollars, up from forty-one billion dollars in 1994. In 1997 that suddenly changed to an outflow of twelve billion dollars, bringing down currencies and

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whole economies in the process.

Despite the lessons of indiscriminate capital liberalization, the reforms sought by the IMF are connected in one way or another with further opening up Asian economies to international capital. Why is the fund insisting on opening capital markets in countries that are awash in domestic savings? Why has the fund done so little to ensure that creditors—European, Japanese, and American banks—bear some of the burden for their reckless lending?

There is nothing new about what the IMF is doing in Asia. For at least fifteen years its loans have been tied to cuts in government spending, currency devaluation, rising interest rates, and opening up to foreign ownership.

The IMF's Asian bailout is based on its experiences with Latin America, in particular with Mexico in 1994. In 1993 and 1994, Mexico allowed the peso to become overvalued. Dollars poured into Mexican financial markets, bidding up the peso. The government itself was borrowing dollars short term, but the inevitable lowering of the exchange rate was too little and too late. Lenders took flight.

At that point, the IMF and the United States arranged a fifty-billion-dollar bailout. The 1995 Mexican bailout is cited by IMF supporters as a success story. Although investors were shielded from risk, and many in fact reaped handsome gains, the social cost was high. Wages in Mexico declined by 28 percent from 1995 to 1997; social spending was slashed; bank lending was cut to near zero; twenty thousand small- and medium-sized businessess—one-third of Mexico's commercial enterprises—went bankrupt; and two million people lost their jobs.

In Asia, as in Mexico, the aim of the IMF's program is to facilitate the return of foreign capital. There are several problems with this. First, a program of recovery demands a more diverse platform than just waiting for foreign investors to return. Second, even granting that focusing on the return of foreign investors alone is a valid strategy, how can they be expected to return and make profitable investments in an economy where a recession is being engineered?

How severe is the Asian recession? Predictions are that in Thailand two million workers—15 percent to 20 percent of the workforce—will be jobless by year's end. In Indonesia, the economic free fall has drastically increased the number of people in poverty, from twenty-two million at the beginning of the year to fifty-eight million people, and the ranks of the unemployed are expected to swell to fifteen million, or nearly 20 percent of the workforce. In South Korea, unemployment is expected to reach two million by the end of 1998, or 10 percent of the workforce.

What about the broader impact of the Asian crisis? The IMF suggests that the rest of the world will remain unscathed. But Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan told a Senate Committee that the crisis in Asia "could have unexpectedly large negative effects on Japan, Latin America and eastern and central Europe that, in turn, could have repercussions elsewhere including the United States." And indeed, Japan is experiencing deflation. Brazil has had to raise interest rates to prevent a currency crisis. Russia's stock market has crashed, and foreign money is leaving the country. China's economy is gripped by a collapse in domestic demand, making it ever more reliant on exports to maintain growth. Despite official denials, China may be forced to devalue its currency, which would set off a new burst of jitters around the world.

Asia, Japan, and China are all trying to export their way out of economic trouble. The United States is being flooded with low-priced goods, particularly in manufacturing. This has led some commentators to argue that the Asian crisis has been good for the United States because it reduces inflation, thereby saving the Federal Reserve Board from having to raise interest rates. But there is danger. A soaring trade deficit, the aging of the business cycle and a pricking of financial market euphoria, could combine to trigger a recession. If the U.S. recovery stalls, then global recession would feed on itself.

BEFORE THE CRISIS the IMF was not worried about the massive inflows of foreign capital to the private sector in Asia. Two of the countries (Indonesia and Thailand) were seen as model pupils of the fund because of their steps toward capital-account liberalization. And immediately prior to the crisis, the

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IMF praised South Korea's "impressive macroeconomic performance [and its] enviable fiscal record." The fund also praised Thailand for its "consistent record of sound macro-economic management policies."

The complacency of the IMF stemmed from the assumption that the large capital inflows were fine so long as they were incurred by the private sector and not by the government to fund deficit spending. Indeed, the high levels of debt of the mid-1990s coincided with most Asian governments running budget surpluses or very slight deficits. The assumption was that the market would ensure a balance between international creditors and Asian banks and enterprises.

But leaving things to unregulated market forces meant that enormous amounts of capital went not to productive investment in manufacturing or industry but to speculative high-yield areas such as real estate. The consequent oversupply of real estate—some twenty billion dollars worth of residential and office buildings in Thailand alone—triggered a crash.

James Tobin, a Nobel laureate in economics, observes that "South Koreans and other Asian countries—like Mexico in 1994-95—are victims of a flawed international exchange rate system that, under U.S. leadership, gives the mobility of capital priority over all other considerations." Jagdish Bhagwati, an outspoken advocate of free trade, argues that "the claims of enormous benefits from free capital mobility are not persuasive. . . . The question, then, is why the world has nonetheless been moving in this direction." The answer, according to Bhagwati, is that "Wall Street's financial firms have obvious self-interest in a world of free capital mobility, since it only enlarges the arena in which to make money. It is not surprising, therefore, that Wall Street has put its powerful oar into the turbulent waters of Washington political lobbying to steer in this direction . . . . [T]he Wall Street-Treasury complex is unable to look much beyond the interest of Wall Street, which it equates with the good of the world."

As if in support of Bhagwati's point, the *Financial Times* reported that U.S. officials have told their "domestic audience that they will use the opportunity provided by the crisis to force radical structural reform on other countries that would amount to what some critics see as an 'Americanization' of the world economy." And U.S. trade representative Charlene Barshevsky has stated that "we expect these [IMF] structural reforms to create new business opportunities for U.S. firms."

THE POLITICAL forces supporting deregulation are moving on many fronts. The IMF is currently trying to amend articles of agreement to require member governments to remove capital controls and adopt full capital-account convertibility—which means that anyone can take capital in and out of any country freely, in any volume, at any time. The World Trade Organization's recent agreement on liberalizing financial services opens banking, insurance, and securities markets to foreign firms. And meanwhile, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has been pushing ahead with negotiation of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, which liberalizes all direct foreign investment, requiring countries to grant equal treatment to foreign as well as domestic companies.

Those who benefit from financial deregulation will contrast the "neutral" wisdom of the markets with the venal politician. Financial crises will be blamed on anyone or anything other than the market. Sophisticated arguments will be made to demonstrate that deregulation is economically efficient, is in the national interest, and that attempts to regulate the markets won't work anyhow. The fact that unregulated markets have proved to be remarkably inefficient will be carefully glossed over.

But behind the arguments about the inability of regulating markets lies a simple fact. Governments determine the legal framework in which financial institutions operate. It is absurd to suppose that governments cannot, if they collectively so desire, regulate the operation of the international money markets. Governments have the means—whether through taxes on short-term turnover or direct capital controls: it is a question of political will. ●

MARK LEVINSON is the chief economist for UNITE, the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees.

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The Vatican and the Holocaust

Susannah Heschel

THE VATICAN statement on the Shoah* addresses two questions: Why didn't Church authorities speak out against the murder of the European Jews? And is there a relationship between Christian anti-Judaism and Nazi anti-Semitism?

It is still unclear why Pope Pius XII remained silent in the face of his knowledge of the death camps. The Vatican statement simply reiterates the old argument about the necessity of caution, according to which Pope Pius XII was silent because he feared the Nazis would take retaliatory measures against Catholic targets, and even against the Vatican itself.

This defense of the Vatican's silence fails to come to grips with the most damning piece of evidence: how the Vatican behaved at the end of the war. Pius XII might have been intimidated before the spring of 1945, but why did he remain silent after Hitler's defeat? The most incriminating insight into the Vatican's real attitudes is its effort to secure safe passage out of Europe for former SS officers being hunted by the Allies. No less a figure than Franz Stangl, former commandant at Treblinka, wanted for the murder of six hundred thousand people, was spirited to South America by an underground railroad of Catholic priests, under the guidance of the Vatican's own Bishop Alois Hudal. The intriguing question is what might have motivated the Vatican to assist those murderers. Surely money was not a factor, nor was political gain. Could it be that the Vatican felt a closer bond to the Nazis than the Jews?

Although German bishops kept their distance from Hitler during his early years, forbidding Catholics to join the National Socialist Party, they quickly changed their minds once he came to power. The Catholic leadership in Germany had been wary of the Weimar democracy and came to see National Socialism as a bulwark against Bolshevism, an attitude shared by Rome. Later, when the Nazis campaigned against Catholicism in Bavaria, some protests did erupt (for example, over the removal of crucifixes from schoolrooms in 1937), but Nazi actions against the Jews sparked almost no reaction whatsoever.

On the second question, the carefully crafted language of the Vatican statement repudiates any linkage between Nazi anti-Semitism and Christian anti-Judaism: "The Shoah was the work of a thoroughly modern neo-pagan regime. Its anti-Semitism had its roots outside of Christianity and, in pursuing its aims, it did not hesitate to oppose the Church and persecute her members also."

THAT ARGUMENT is not new. Quite a few historians have declared that there was no direct link between Christianity and Nazi anti-Semitism because the Nazis adhered to an anti-Semitism based on racism and nationalism rather than religion. Christians, they argue, may have hated Jews, but always held the door open to conversion—thus, there was no racism there. Of course, this argument can't quite account for experiences like that of the medieval Spanish Jews who converted: once they became Christians, they were relegated to second-class status and hunted by the Inquisition for signs of Jewish practices. Christian teachings of contempt for the Jews, especially the charge of deicide, were crucial in creating a receptivity toward Nazi anti-Semitism.

Still, although Christianity laid the foundation for Nazi anti-Semitism, it never called for mass extermination of the Jews. Moreover, the historian Jonathan Steinberg has noted striking differences between the responses of Italian and German officers to SS requests to turn over Jews for transport to death camps; the Germans obeyed promptly, while the Italians simply didn't cooperate. Both Italy and Germany are Christian countries and their

*"We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah," Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, March 1998.

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very different attitudes toward Jews are more likely based on cultural differences than on religious background. Christianity is a factor in the Shoah, but not necessarily the decisive one. Finally, the Vatican statement stresses that Nazi hostility was expressed toward Christianity as well as toward Jews, an argument also heard from some church historians who like to depict Jews and Christians as common victims of National Socialist persecution. Yet the hostility of the Nazis toward Christianity, which is undeniable, was itself the product of Christian anti-Jewish teachings. For centuries, Christian theology had taught the degeneracy of Judaism. Once the Nazis defined Christianity as a Jewish, rather than Aryan, religion, its degeneracy, too, was indisputable. Under National Socialism, Christianity fell victim to its own canards.

Although Pope John Paul II has taken a great interest in recent years in demonstrating philo-Semitic attitudes, he has not set a pattern for Vatican theologians. Nor has it been made clear to non-European Catholics why teaching of contempt for Judaism is a significant theological issue. Progress between Jews and Catholics has not been made by the Vatican statement, nor is it ever likely to occur through the language of diplomacy. Disappointment over the Vatican statement on the Shoah reflects the hope that a stronger expression might have been formulated, one that would mirror in courage the 1965 Vatican statement on relations with the Jews, *Nostra aetate*. Still, this is surely not the last word we will hear from the Vatican on this matter, and as a first step it is to be welcomed. ●

SUSANNAH HESCHEL is Eli Black Associate Professor of Jewish Studies at Dartmouth College and the author of *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*.

Margaret O'Brien Steinfels

ON MARCH 16, the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews released a long-awaited statement, "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah," examining the Catholic Church and the Holocaust. Well, not exactly *the* the Catholic church, as Lenny Bruce used to say. For the Vatican statement very carefully distanced "the church as such," from the sins of her sons and daughters; yes, Catholics have sinned, but the Catholic Church is sinless. This theological distinction is lost on most non-Catholics, but it is hotly contested territory within the church. The statement also defined anti-Semitism as a modern and pagan phenomenon distinct from anti-Judaism—Christian theological objections to Judaism that go back to the first century. The distinction has some merit, but a church that once prayed for the conversion of "the perfidious Jews" can hardly defend the notion that a neat divide separates anti-Judaism from the development of anti-Semitism.

An array of critics, Jewish and Catholic, has dissected these and other weaknesses in the document (see, *Commonweal*'s editorial "Misremembered," April 10, 1998), while acknowledging its positive points: its clear statement that the Shoah took place, that hostility to Jews had religious roots, and that remembrance of the part Catholics played is necessary to repentance.

A veteran participant in the Jewish-Christian dialogue, Judith Banki recalls that similar critical reactions greeted earlier documents, including Vatican II's *Nostra aetate*. Nonetheless, she concludes, these statements ultimately have had "powerful and positive consequences" in fostering greatly improved relations between Jews and Catholics (*Commonweal*, April 24, 1998). Although herself critical of "We Remember," Banki expects it, too, will make a contribution to that dialogue. So perhaps this statement is just another blip on a trajectory that continues toward greater understanding between Jews and Catholics. One hopes so.

Yet complex questions intrude here about institutional apologies and collective responsibility (as they have elsewhere: over slavery, the dropping of the atomic bomb, the rape of Nanking, the war in Vietnam). We may agree that such travesties cry out for repentance and

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reconciliation, for apologies and pleas for forgiveness. But how should this moral reckoning be carried out? Or even, given the unique horror of the Holocaust, can it be carried out without somehow domesticating an evil that must radically subvert all of our ideas about God, morality, and the intelligibility of life?

How does an institution or a government truly apologize? Is a bill of particulars to be drawn up and agreed upon? And when apologies are offered, who's in charge of forgiving—or not? Who in the Jewish community can say to the German or French governments, the Catholic Church, or the U.S. State Department: "We forgive you for killing our brothers and sisters, for complicity, for ignoring their plight, for not doing enough to rescue them"? Yes, the Jewish community can receive expressions of remorse and sorrow; it can receive compensation and take note of acts of repentance, but forgive sins committed against others? And we must ask as well, "How can anyone apologize for sins committed by others?"

Collective apologies are complicated. Who is to make a collective apology on behalf of a government or institution? Well, presumably the president of the United States, the prime minister of Japan, or the pope in the case of the Vatican is an appropriate authority. Yet no institutional leader is ever free of historical and bureaucratic memory or can ignore the resistance of those who genuinely believe no wrongs were committed. That is why it is unlikely that a U.S. president will apologize for the dropping of the atomic bomb as long as one U.S. veteran lives who believes it saved his life. "We Remember," with all the defensive cuts and stitches of a committee report, illustrates the problem. Stereotypes to the contrary, the pope is not a divine-right monarch; there are both doctrinal and organizational limits to his power, and many of the latter lie in the curial offices meant to serve him, in the very offices that wrote and vetted "We Remember." Only its opening and closing paragraphs convey a spirit of heartfelt regret. The rest assumes that the Vatican and Pius XII did the best they could. Still, hope is held out that Pope John Paul II might do more. He has been forthright in seeking reconciliation with Jews and has set the church on a journey of repentance leading up to the millennium. The bishops of Germany and France have also uttered their mea culpas.

For what, exactly, should the church apologize? Pius XII, pope during World War II and the Vatican's representative to Germany during the 1930s, has been lighted upon as the man who did too little, said too little, and, above all, who failed to denounce Nazi actions loudly and clearly (even though, then as now, there was considerable evidence that such actions would have increased rather than checked the killings). By failing to acknowledge these questions surrounding Pius's decisions, "We Remember" reinforces the unfortunate tendency to make him the focal point of the church's examination of conscience.

IT IS EASY to understand demands that these questions about Pius be taken up by church officials; it is less easy to understand the efforts to demonize him. Amid outright crimes, inaction and indifference, and swamps of moral ambiguity in which good people floundered, Pius possibly saved as many Jewish lives as anyone else. Is Pius on trial a stand-in for God on trial? Or, at least in some circles, do we not hear an echo of "*Ecrasez l'infâme*!"? Personifying in Pius the question of Christianity's and the Catholic Church's complicity in making the death camps possible both obscures and obstructs what should be a searching examination of centuries of toxic teaching.

That kind of examination is, thank God, well underway in Catholicism. But repentance, in the end, cannot be compelled. It must arise from a sincere and truthful heart. An institutional apology is mere surface, even hypocrisy, unless in some real sense an entire people comes to an understanding of where and how they have wronged others. It is not in the power of popes or presidents to apologize unless there is a genuine sense that they speak for a repentant people. ●

MARGARET O'BRIEN STEINFELS is the editor of *Commonweal*. The editorial "Misremembered" and Judith Banki's article "Catholics and Jews" can be found on *Commonweal*'s Web site: www.commonwealmagazine.com.

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Guyana: Reclamations

Marina Budhos

In March 1997, when the body of Cheddi Jagan, former president of Guyana, lay in state near the tiny village where he was born, the crowds of villagers and sugar workers streaming past to catch a last glimpse of their leader were so enormous that the cremation ceremony had to be postponed. Almost a hundred thousand people crowded into the Albion Sports Center, in a country of less than eight hundred thousand. Finally, the next day, Jagan's widow, Janet Jagan, got on the radio and said to the country: "It's time. It's time to let him go and continue on."

Nothing better characterizes the problems facing Guyana, a lush country sitting on the eastern tip of South America. For fifty years, Guyana has lived under the spell of charismatic leaders, hanging onto a past it needs to let go of. Now, with Jagan's death, Guyana—however reluctantly—must usher in a new era. Yet even this transition is being led by an icon of the past.

Nine months later, on December 15, Janet Jagan was declared the winner in a presidential race, having pulled in 56 percent of the vote. Her victory was as much an homage to a political legacy as it is an expression of nervous uncertainty about who will shape the country's destiny.

To me, Cheddi Jagan always loomed as an eerie, romantic alternative to my own father. They grew up in neighboring villages in the easternmost region of Guyana, a muddy flatland where their grandparents toiled as indentured workers in the sugar plantations. As young, ambitious men, both made their way to the United States, which transformed them. For Jagan, it was a journey of political awakening—into Marxism, which he brought back to Guyana; for my father, it was a journey of immigration, with all its possibilities of identity and mobility.

In September 1996, a few months before Jagan's death, I went down to Guyana for the first time. I found a place still living on old myths of political heroism and betrayal, having trouble finding its way into the future.

The Guyana of my imagination was frozen in time—forty years ago, in the grainy black-and-white photographs my mother brought back from her stay in my father's village. Those were the days when Jagan helped found the country's independence movement, joining a glowing pantheon of elegant intellectual statesmen and socialist freedom fighters from the West Indies, like Eric Williams, C.L.R. James, and Michael Manley (who coincidentally died a day after Jagan). At our dinner table in Queens, New York, my father would offer misty recollections of what it was like to grow up under colonialism: "Indians and blacks, we were all in it together, fighting the British."

It was with this vision of shared struggle that Cheddi and his American wife, Janet, launched the People's Progressive Party (PPP), a multiracial coalition, in 1950. But that ideal foundered on the shoals of international cold-war conflict and deep-seated local racial divisions. Guyana's population is roughly 55 percent Indian, 35 percent African, along with smaller numbers of Portuguese, Chinese, and Amerindians.

In 1955, the black leader Forbes Burnham split from the PPP and started his own party, the People's National Congress (PNC). Though the two parties espoused almost identical political policies, the heady days of racial cooperation were over. Although the PPP won again in 1956, the British considered Burnham the less dangerous choice and were leery of

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Jagan, who unabashedly looked to the Soviet Union and later Cuba as political models.

In the early 1960s, with independence imminent, President John F. Kennedy threw the U.S. government's weight behind Burnham; it is well known that the Central Intelligence Agency was behind much of the labor unrest and the civil strife that nearly tore the country apart at that time. Jagan's government was destabilized, and Burnham was voted into power in 1964; for the next twenty-eight years, the PNC would rule through rigged elections. Jagan stayed on as leader of the PPP all those years, pounding the opposition pulpit, surviving the worst of times.

Burnham, by all accounts, was a brilliant orator, a man who tried on ideologies like suits. The Cambridge-educated colonial of the fifties became a militant black leader and then a demented third-world socialist, performing voodoo ceremonies in his presidential palace. Guyana was renamed a cooperative republic, as Burnham grew infatuated with the idea of large-scale cooperative farms in the virtually uninhabitable interior.

Eventually, Burnham ran up the worst foreign debt in the Western hemisphere, sealed off the economy, and turned Guyana into a paramilitary state. By the mid-seventies, Guyana had become a place of crime, shady dealings, and "choke-and-rob" gangsters stalking people on the streets of Georgetown. Everyone knew its elections were rigged—even "overseas Guyanese" could vote.

During the Burnham years, nearly half of the Guyanese population settled overseas—in the last decade, this tiny country was responsible for the fourth largest immigrant group in New York City. "The whole country was waiting to leave," Bernadette Persaud, a Guyanese painter, told me. "We didn't care about the country, we let it go, the roads deteriorated, we put out garbage right out on the streets. We were filled with self-contempt, and that became our justification for leaving."

In 1985, when Burnham died, inflation was a raging 70 percent, Gross Domestic Product growth a laughable .4 percent, and the government couldn't pay its bills. When his successor, Desmond Hoyte, took over as president, he began slashing the country's bloated, centralized bureacracy and selling off government-owned companies. Companies like Reynolds Aluminum, driven out during the heyday of third-world nationalization, came back to Guyana to do business. The 1992 elections were monitored by the Carter Center, and the People's Progressive/Civic party was declared victorious, having garnered roughly 54 percent of the vote—almost all Indian. The 1992 elections were a historical watershed: for those in the PPP, this was their moment of historical justice, with their wronged leader rising from the ashes. For others, it meant more of the same in a country dominated by two racialized parties and two charismatic personalities.

On my first morning in Guyana, I was hustled into a minivan to accompany a group of visiting delegates who were there for the fiftieth-year celebration of the Rice Producers' Association (RPA). The event was an odd mix of 4-H country fair and political rally. New tractors and combines sat in a rutted, muddy field, while farmers packed the cramped benches inside a freshly painted schoolhouse festooned with crepe-paper banners. The only black people in the room were the steel-drum players of the Guyana Police Force Band.

The speeches were stiff, old, party-style exhortations, as if this were a revival meeting of apparatchiks. A sense of vengeance crackled in the air, like static electricity, and an anniversary celebration quickly slid into PPP boosterism. "Gone are the days of PNC and their incompetent government!" "We have survived! Fifty years of resistance, we have endured! Long live the RPA!"

Cheddi Jagan ascended the podium and was lavished with garlands from three young girls before launching into his speech. Jagan reminded me of a bright, elderly professor, eager to assimilate new concepts like "diversification," "global economy," and "downsizing" into his well-worn lectures.

I could imagine the old Cheddi, campaigning in these coastal villages years before. In the old days the rhetoric was about class

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struggle. Now the message was efficiency and high-quality crops so Guyana could compete with other rice producers on the world market. Members of the rural audience seemed frozen in another era: riveted on their children's benches, passive, listening to their leader as he wove a story that connected them to the larger world.

That night, however, the time warp broke and forty years of cultural influences poured in. A Caribbean fusion band took the stage, strumming out a mix of hip-hop and chutney-calypso. The benches were packed with families, while in the back teenage boys were whooping it up; they might have been on Jamaica Avenue in Queens, with their homeboy jeans and hightops and New York T-shirts. In 1992, when Jagan was elected, another change arrived: television, and with it, all the new fashions and music. Globalization of culture was well underway.

GEORGETOWN WAS exactly as I had envisioned it: long, broad avenues, white wood houses with exquisite lace lattice work and jalousie windows. The British had built a Garden City from which they meant to rule.

But the Georgetown I encountered was also a capital ravaged by war—a war of politics and neglect. The houses were crumbling wrecks, the roads rutted and impassable. One could stroll along a busy boulevard and a moment later disappear into a dangerous, burnt-out pocket.

Yet there were stirrings of change. Outside my hotel, Main Street was being repaved—part of the government's commitment to restore Georgetown's roads by the end of the year. Next door was a persistent banging, as workers renovated the lemon-colored National Library. Donkey carts trundled side by side with new Lexus cars. Down the street, every night at the Palm Court Restaurant, groups of men mingled, flashing cellular phones, drinking, while the DJ spun the latest remixes of soca hits.

On my second evening I attended a party on the lawn of State House, the presidential home. Though my hotel was only three blocks away, I was warned to take a taxi, since the streets of Georgetown are still dangerous. At the party, I asked a man who was temporarily serving as attorney general how Jagan had managed to remake himself from a Marxist to a moderate liberal who courted foreign investors. Had the Guyanese people followed him in this shift?

"The people of Guyana are not ideological," the man replied. "Ideas are for the metropolis. Guyanese follow a leader."

"And what happens when there isn't a leader?" I asked.

"There's a saying in the Caribbean," he laughed. "One rasta dies and another springs up."

The question of leadership was a thorn that pricked every conversation. At the time, Mrs. Jagan had just recovered from a heart attack. Even for those who are critical of the Jagans, her illness was disturbing. It reminded them of the vacuum of leadership their deaths would leave. "An era is about to pass," I was told many times.

Guyana lost an entire generation—those in their thirties and forties, who would have moved up in the ranks, challenged their elders. Instead, most educated professionals settled in Toronto, New York, and London, making new lives as immigrants. The hemorrhaging of young, educated Guyanese means the two major parties ossified, leaving little room for change or fresh ideas.

When Jagan first came into office, he called on overseas Guyanese to repatriate, invest in the country. Some did—including several who became ministers in his cabinet. Business people also came. Within months, many got disgusted and left again. The reasons given were low salaries and inefficiencies in the infrastructure. Beneath these obvious explanations, though, lurked another tension: that between insiders and outsiders.

The die-hard, loyal "comrades" who stuck out the really bad years with no flour on their shelves, who lost their jobs or were jailed for belonging to the wrong party or race, resent the expatriates who made their way back home. Raymond, a recent college graduate who returned to run a food relief program, told me, "There's still an ideological taint, coming from a capitalist country like the States." An-

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other man, a consultant in his thirties (there are many "consultants" running around Guyana these days, though it was hard to pin down what they do) talked about how he had to pay respect to the old-timers for their sacrifices in order to get anything done.

THERE IS, essentially, one road in Guyana—the highway that runs roughly parallel to the sea wall. I was struck by this when I finally arranged for a car and driver and set out for Letter Kenny village to find out what happened to my aunts. Most of Guyana lives on a slender strip of reclaimed coastland, made possible by an ingenious system of canals and dams built by the Dutch in the seventeenth century. The land is flat as far as the eye can see, with huge gold-stippled fields of cane and rice.

Throughout my childhood I was haunted by the photographs of our family home in this part of Guyana: the large white house on tall stilts, the carved shutters and imported European furniture. Our house was a symbol of my family's proud rise: we were the first in the village to convert to Christianity; my father and uncles were the first to pass the Cambridge overseas exam; and one of my aunts was the haughty local Sunday school teacher.

I had somehow pictured the village to be a quaint grouping of houses, a central square with a church and schoolhouse. But we nearly whizzed right by Letter Kenny, for the entire village was lined up along the highway—everything from the Justice of the Peace's office to the gas station to the rice mill. The one-room schoolhouse where my father had gone to school was boarded up, goats ambling through the weeds.

Rain was falling heavily as I got out of the car to talk to a gas-station owner. When I mentioned my family name, his eyes clouded over and he muttered, "Everyone's dead." He pointed vaguely ahead. "There's just the plot of land."

When I finally located the family lot, I found that our house no longer stood. In its place was a rough wood shack, a new welding shop. The men working on jacked up cars watched, curious and nervous, as I picked my way through the rubble, looking for some artifact of my family.

The story I learned was disturbing. Standing in a muddy cemetery, where all my aunts and uncles and grandparents were buried, I listened to a neighbor pour out the tale of my family's demise. As my aunts grew more dotty with age, villagers would slip inside the house and steal from them. They took the beautiful, hand-sewn dresses, the embroidered pillows, the diamond ring and gold bangles. The money we sent them somehow never made it to their hands. The stairs fell off the stilted house until my aunts were marooned in one room, dependent on the kindness of good neighbors who would climb the ladder, bring food, chase away the intruders.

It was a painful story, yet it gave me a telling image of Guyana during the bad political years: these proud Indian aunts, trapped in another era with their colonial airs, hostage to their wreck of a house as it was looted and destroyed around them. But there are signs of hope. On top of the rotten boards, something new has been built: a welding shop, signs of a new energy and wealth. If my past is gone, perhaps a new Guyana is being born.

BEFORE MEETING with Janet Jagan, I was nervous. I expected a severe, tight-lipped party ideologue. But the woman who greeted me in an empty sitting room was plump and grandmotherly, dressed in purple stretch pants and a polyester print blouse. She fussed about the cat, brought me a glass of soda, chatted about her family. When I asked about some current political struggles, she waved her hand, dismissing them as "momentary." Behind Janet Jagan's softness, though, I detected an unswerving and willful intelligence, able to guide the conversation in the direction she wanted.

Calmly she ran over the accomplishments of the PPP/Civic government: the restoration of democracy—"Parliament was a farce before that"; its commitment to education; the selling of new house lots to the poor; its efforts to establish racial harmony. On this last, she blamed the PNC for igniting the race issue all over again, complaining, "When we expose corruption, it gets switched into race. The PNC plays a nasty game."

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While we were talking, President Jagan returned with one of his aides from a PPP fund-raising event at the races. "I couldn't bet," he admitted sheepishly, "because I didn't bring any money." Janet Jagan giggled, remarking that Cheddi had never been the one in the family to take care of the money. "Now that he's president he doesn't do anything like shopping. So he doesn't have any money to gamble."

This moment—so quaintly domestic, making the president seem like a sweet, preoccupied husband—was telling. There was an endearing down-to-earth simplicity to the Jagans. One could see how easy it was to accept their version of things. The impulse to mythologize them was in me too, for they were like reassuring, modest parents.

Yet one of the harshest criticisms of the PPP/Civic government is exactly this—that it runs the country like a family. Sensitive political problems, like government appointments and corruption investigations, are handled behind the scenes, like a family crisis discussed after the children have gone to bed. Though the PPP/Civic advertises itself as an inclusive party, and there have been no violent reprisals against blacks, the party draws from a largely Indian vote, and the government appointed largely Indian boards and ministers.

No one doubted Cheddi Jagan's own integrity. There was a spartan idealism to both him and Janet that was a welcome relief after Burnham. But surrounding them were the murkier waters of the party.

"There is no Guyana," Sam, a black engineer, told me bluntly as we sat in the hotel restaurant in Georgetown. "The feelings of nationalism and patriotism in Guyana are gone. The people are living here, but they're not living here."

Since 1961, Sam has lived the quintessential postcolonial, transnational life, working in various places in the Caribbean as a consultant. He talked about what lies behind the veneer of shiny new automobiles, concrete houses with carved balconies and high gates: cocaine money, gangster money, narco money. "You see more fancy motor cars," Sam told me bitterly. "But the quality of the roads is the same. Education hasn't improved. Our human social index is way down."

Sam's anger was palpable—he barely touched his drink, and he had an air of agitation and paranoia about the current government. To him, the botched road projects, the appointment of largely Indian boards, were part of a larger scheme to keep the black side of the country down. For Sam, the history of the country boiled down to race: the story of a larger, richer Indian bloc threatening an imperiled African community dependent on the state for its livelihood. "How are you going to get an underpaid civil servant to police a rice magnate?" he asked. "It won't work."

I felt unprepared for Sam's bitterness as he argued that "the owners of capital are East Indians. Africans do not have sustainable communities because we have not gathered capital. So the concept of a country doesn't exist. East Indians will rewrite it from a position of capital. Like the Jews in America."

I realized that he saw me as an Americanized Indo-Guyanese. But the other part of my identity, less obvious—Jewish—suddenly rose to the surface; tears pricked my eyes. Sam registered my discomfort, abruptly said his goodbye, and walked out of the restaurant.

Race is everywhere in Guyana—it shades every perception of the past, the present, and the future. And yet race is nowhere, since officially, under a unity government, it doesn't exist.

The next day I flew with Beni Sankar to see his rice-growing and -milling operations. The Sankar family owns thousands of acres of rice fields in two different parts of the country and a major mill in Essequibo. From the small plane, I could see all of Guyana, with its neat squares of rice fields, the wide brown rivers flowing into the Atlantic Ocean, dense green forest behind, rolling all the way to Brazil.

We landed in the Sankars' complex in Essequibo, where the sorting machines hummed with efficiency. As the evening sun slanted across the fields, rice farmers were still bringing their trucks, piled high with grain, into the mill compound to be weighed. Down the road, I could see the mandir of a freshly

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painted Hindu temple, a huge green cricket field. There was a sense of serene prosperity in this part of the country: children bicycling home, pots clattering in the kitchen, people calling on the road. This was the Guyana that people, through all the political troubles, hold dear: a rustic, simple warmth, a country that should not be in debt, that is ample and rich enough to feed its own people. Here is what I had wanted so badly, what I had hoped to find in Letter Kenny village. For the first time, I realized, I was happy here.

The mood was not to last long. I returned to Georgetown, started phoning around and was soon exhausted. More and more I became aware of the limitations of my own identity, such that my connections kept leading me back to the Indian side of this country. I tried to reach several names I'd been given—women activists, members of the PNC opposition, ministers, but it never worked out, with different schedules and bad phone connections. There was an inaccessibility, an insularity, that took its toll. I was depressed, listless.

I decided to take a walk through the Botanic Gardens. During the Burnham years, Bernadette Persaud painted a series of paintings of the gardens: eerie, ghostlike silhouettes of soldiers with bayonets embedded in the lush foliage. It was the only way she knew to express her outrage at the dictatorship.

Now there were no soldiers, but the sense of menace remained. The entire time, I was uneasy, not sure if this was safe for a woman. A man whizzed by on a bicycle and shouted, "What are you doing here alone?" I couldn't tell if this was an expression of concern or a threat. In the heat, the utter stillness of the gardens, the limp tropic glades, my senses had grown dulled; I dragged my feet back to the hotel and braced myself for another day of frustating phone calls. I felt that I had walked in on a place swimming in its own murky waters, still caught in its squabbles, unable to see to the outside.

When I finally sat down to talk to Cheddi Jagan in his office, I was disappointed. He was less engaging and personal than I'd hoped. A week before, when we'd met on the State House lawn, he had laughed, patted people on the arms, made jokes. Hearing that I was a writer, Jagan's eyes had lit up as he told me that he too wrote. His writings are sold everywhere in Guyana: his autobiography, *The West on Trial*, his defense of his political record, *Forbidden Freedom*, his pamphlets and stapled Xeroxes of his speeches.

Today he was all dry business, giving me a rote rundown of his policies, emphasizing that he was procapital, pro-foreign investment, but not at the cost of the social state. The picture Jagan painted was one of a feisty, independent country talking back to the might of capital. "We have told all the businesspeople who are coming here they have to respect two things," he explained. "The workers' rights to have trade unions and to bargain collectively. And they must respect the environment."

He summarized the achievements of his administration. He'd raised salaries as high as possible under the austere conditions—roughly 15 percent since 1993. The country had gone from 82 percent inflation in 1991 to 4.5 percent and experienced the highest growth rate in the region. He had slowly privatized certain industries yet resisted the World Bank's recommendation that Guyana raise interest rates to spur the economy. He was firm on one point: "Give us debt relief!" Warmed up, he added, with a flourish of rhetoric: "We must walk very skillfully, with facts and figures, between conformism and transformation."

Despairing of a frank interview, I nearly shut off the tape recorder. But after a while, I realized that underneath the speechmaking, there was a certain charming earnestness to Jagan. His enthusiasm, his lively energy, was infectious. While others might see Guyana as a scruffy, obscure country, Jagan viewed it as a beacon for the rest of the world, and a humane example for all third world countries trying to control their destinies. Eyes sparkling, he boasted that when it came to increases in public wages, Guyana was far more advanced than Israel and all of Latin America. After all these years, I discovered, Jagan had lost none of the glow of idealism; he was a man who lived for abstractions.

As I left the president's office, I knew that

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the real legacy of Cheddi Jagan was not his specific policies. What Jagan gave people was hope. Even his enemies, who despise the PPP, had to admit there was something genial and good natured about Cheddi Jagan that touched people. This was why thousands lined the coastal road as his coffin was brought to rest; why the crowds were so immense, the outpourings lavish with emotion.

Even though Cheddi incarnated another era, his personal integrity gave the country time to heal, and may have laid the foundation for the country's reconstruction. In choosing Janet Jagan, once again, the country is relying on a figure from the past to buy them time in defining the future. Yet the PNC refused to accept her victory, denouncing the elections as rigged. Politics in Guyana continues to be about family: like aunts and uncles dwelling on an old, painful family feud, Guyanese rehash the dates of political betrayals as if they happened yesterday. Whereas Burnham appealed to the Afro-Guyanese fears as an endangered family, the Jagans appealed to the Indian sense of clannishness and self-preservation. It's this division, this history, that prevents Guyana from developing a democratic culture and trust in political institutions.

On my last evening I attended an informal "bottomhouse" meeting in Buxton village, a very poor black area that has witnessed terrible violence and unrest over the years. I was driven out to Buxton by an Indian taxi driver I had befriended during my stay. On the way out, we talked about whether the country was doing better. He insisted it was, though change was taking too much time. He commented that he'd started to see black families buying housing lots in predominantly Indian villages. Yet as we neared Buxton and turned down the rutted roads, I sensed his nervousness; he made some remark about how the people here don't even bother to clean their own yards, what can you expect from them?

We were met by two young men who took me down a narrow path to the rear house of a local herbalist, to the bottomhouse—the space underneath the stilts. The men who had gathered around a rough-hewn table were discussing a broken sea-wall reinforcement, inadequate water pumps for the village. These were the same problems the Buxton villagers struggled with a century before when they were trying to free themselves from the grip of the large-plantation owners.

A man passed out photographs of a sea-wall reinforcement. One could quickly see the shoddy workmanship, the seams so crooked they didn't match up. From his pocket he brought out two small chunks of concrete which he rubbed together. They immediately started to crumble, trickling a white powder. "This," he said dramatically, "this is what is being used to protect us from the pounding, pounding sea."

I admired these men, dealing with the pragmatics of poverty; how, in the wake of a small disaster, they had taken it upon themselves to get to the bottom of a problem, taking photographs, writing letters to the authorities. Others may talk vaguely about the need for a "culture of accountability," but these men were simply trying to make their village function—getting decent drinking water that comes out of the pump at the same hour every day; using their own wits to make the authorities accountable to them.

Months later, it is the image of those men I keep returning to. Guyana, a lush patch of land sitting under sea level, was reclaimed by the Dutch and their ingenious canals; reclaimed again by the descendants of slaves and coolies, once more from a ruinous dictatorship by the immigrants who are coming back, the multinationals who see the natural worth of this country. These villagers must now again prepare for the next assault of capital, rumbling on a not-so-distant horizon. Some will prosper; some like Buxton, dependent on public wages, will surely sink.

When I heard news of Cheddi Jagan's death, I felt an eerie disconnection, as a chunk of the world, that small muddy country I'd heard about my whole life, had disappeared beneath the edge of my knowledge. But perhaps this is what it's all about: these cycles of loss and reclamation, the condition of migration and memory, an old leadership giving way to the new. Yet I cannot stop thinking of those men, huddled around their rough wood table, scraping two

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lumps of concrete together as they brace against the massive changes they know lie waiting on the other side. ●

MARINA BUDHOS is the author of *House of Waiting* and the forthcoming novel *The Professor of Light*.

Douglas W. Payne

In Jamaica, Hero Day is Done

BEFORE THE Jamaican elections last December I visited Clive Dobson, president of the National Workers Union (NWU), at the union's modest, two-story office amid the Victorian decay of downtown Kingston. Michael Manley headed this union for nearly twenty years before he was first elected prime minister in 1972. Old-timers like Dobson still talk of the resounding ninety-seven-day strike against the state television company in 1964, when Manley, a light-skinned son of privilege, led marches and mass lie-downs at the company headquarters. He exhorted the workers to bring down the "walls of Jericho," and the workers called him "Joshua."

As prime minister, Manley enacted minimum-wage laws, compulsory recognition of labor unions, maternity leave for women, and equal status under the law for children born to unwed parents. In the end, though, he could not deliver Jamaicans to the promised land, and historians will be pondering for years his ill-starred attempt to build democratic socialism in the 1970s and his startling shift to market liberalization after Jamaicans returned him to power in 1989.

But few would dispute that throughout his life Manley inspired a feeling of self-worth in a people who had been trampled by history. Even when his People's National Party (PNP) was voted out of office, opinion polls showed that he remained the most popular figure in the country. Upon Manley's death in March 1997, Rex Nettleford, one of Jamaica's most respected thinkers, said, "He gave us a sense of place and a sense of purpose, which is very important for an ex-slave and an ex-colonial people."

Manley resigned as prime minister in 1992 and left politics altogether, his strength sapped by an ongoing battle with cancer. His party has remained in power, but the idealism that Manley exuded in everything he did is gone. I was telling Dobson about the Socialist International council meeting held in New Delhi last year when an aide stepped in to hand him some files. The young man said, with more than a trace of sarcasm, "How nice to hear about the Socialist International." I asked what he meant, but before he could answer Dobson leaned across his desk, propped a fist under his goatee and said, "Because in Jamaica there is no longer sufficient deliberation about the subject of democratic socialism."

In fact, there was no mention of either democratic socialism or social democracy in the PNP's glossy, seventy-two-page election manifesto. "Now the line is economic reform with a human face," Dobson said. "But that's just camouflage." He said the union still supported the PNP. "But there's no more blank check. Our priority now is to unite the workers here and throughout the Caribbean. Labor rights have never been more threatened."

Dobson spoke wistfully about the efforts of Manley and Willy Brandt, the late former German chancellor and president of the Socialist International, to forge a North-South alliance in favor of a more just world economic order. "Democracy didn't win the cold war, capital did," Dobson said. "We have globalization on the Nike model and run by the World Trade Organization. Governments don't have the power or the will to do anything about it."

Earlier I had walked down along the harbor, through the assembly-for-export zone es-

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tablished in the 1980s by the government of Edward Seaga, Manley's longtime nemesis and darling of the Reagan administration. A group of women had gathered in front of the locked gates of a Philippine-owned plant that manufactures T-shirts, or *ganzi*, in the local patois. They said they were afraid the plant would not reopen. Production had been halted a number of times since the government raised the minimum wage to the equivalent of twenty-two dollars a week and, they said, two women had been fired after managers overheard them talking about organizing a union.

"Workers are losing their jobs and the way it's done is inhuman," Dobson said. "The factories are all leased, so the companies can pack up their machinery and be gone overnight—without paying the workers. But even if your job doesn't disappear off to Mexico or Central America, it's still sweatshop wages. It's like we've gone back to the days of slavery."

OVER THE last three years dozens of apparel operations have closed, putting thousands out of work. Officially, unemployment in Jamaica is now nearing 20 percent. Dobson said that if the informal sector were taken into account, the figure probably would be closer to 30 percent. Since 1997 the PNP government has been subsidizing the apparel industry to the tune of 5 percent of operating costs. Yet that still has not been sufficient to offset cheaper labor and more docile workforces elsewhere. In trying to dissuade one Taiwanese-owned textile outfit from leaving, the government even gave it permission to bring in two hundred of its own Asian workers.

The PNP won the elections in December and P.J. Patterson, the reserved technocrat who succeeded Manley, secured another term as prime minister. It seemed quite a feat, considering the rising unemployment, a stagnant economy, deteriorating infrastructure, and a drug- and poverty-fueled crime wave in which more than a thousand people were murdered in 1997. That figure surpassed the number of violent deaths in New York City, which has a population nearly three times that of Jamaica. But for many Jamaicans the alternative evidently looked worse. Seaga still runs the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) as his own private fiefdom, and although he now sounds more like a populist than a conservative, he is even more abrasive and vindictive than he used to be. The PNP may not be doing much for Jamaicans, but a majority are probably more afraid of what Seaga might do to them.

Before the PNP's post-victory press conference at the luxurious Pegasus Hotel uptown, I ran across George Lee, who was Michael Manley's press secretary during the late 1970s. "Yes," he said, "the PNP still wins elections, but the support is thin." He noted that voter abstention rates have climbed to a third or more this decade. "A lot of people think the PNP has become a right-wing party," he said, "and many of the youth don't see any hope in either party."

I asked him why he thought Manley had suddenly deregulated the economy in the early 1990s. "You have to remember what Eddie left him," he said. In 1989, after nine years of what the Reagan administration called Seaga's "economic miracle," Jamaica had the highest per capita foreign debt in the Western hemisphere and more than 50 percent of the country's export earnings were needed to service it. "Before Michael could do anything else, he had to bring in foreign investment to keep the country from going under." That reminded me of something Manley told an interviewer the year before he resigned. "The world economy is tone deaf—it doesn't listen to anybody," he said. "It only deals with those who can produce successfully for it."

"I know one thing," Lee continued, "and Michael said it often himself. It hurt him deeply to see the pain these so-called reforms brought upon the people. I think that, as much as the cancer, made him decide to step down. Since then, it's been P.J.'s show. He's a decent man, but . . . " He completed the sentence with a shrug.

After Patterson fielded a battery of questions from Jamaican journalists about cabinet appointments, I asked him, "What is Michael Manley's legacy and how will it be manifest in your next administration?" Every head in the room turned in my direction, as if I had spoken in tongues. Patterson thought for a long moment before responding. He said that he

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had served with Michael Manley from the beginning. He noted that the PNP had maintained a strong tradition of internal democracy, which is true, and concluded by saying that the PNP's vision of the future could be found in the party manifesto.

I later put the same question to Portia Simpson, whom many in Jamaica see as a potential successor to Patterson as leader of the PNP. "On his dying bed, Michael Manley gave me the charge to keep working on behalf of the poor and the oppressed," she said. "Whatever we have to do to prepare for the new millennium, we must do it with a human face." Simpson is the Minister of Labor. Her office granted the permits to the two hundred imported Asian textile workers.

The day before I left Jamaica, I squeezed into one of Kingston's rattletrap jitney buses next to a gaunt, ebony-skinned young man wearing tight-fitting rectangular sunglasses. He asked where I was going. When I told him National Heroes Park he laughed and said, "Hero day done in this country, mon." He hopped off the bus with me, nearly losing a sneaker, the one that had no laces. He introduced himself as Wavell, and asked if maybe I would give him a few dollars if he showed me around. "For example," he said, "I can tell you not to be goin' to no Tastee place." Tastee is a chain of meat pattie joints and the day before robbers had sprayed one of the downtown franchises with automatic weapons, killing three people and wounding a number of others.

The park is in the center of Kingston, a desolate oval of scrubby grass, broken fences, and a few shriveled trees. A concrete monument has begun to crumble above the tomb of Norman Manley, the founder of the PNP. His son, Michael, lies nearby. A hot wind off the harbor carried aloft the cries of children and canine yelps from the adjacent ghetto. Along a wall that faced the park was a faded mural. Looking closely, I saw that it was the face of Michael Manley framed by the slogans "Power for the People" and "The Word Is Love," indicating that the mural had probably been painted during the 1972 campaign.

On top of the wall the newly privatized Air Jamaica company had erected a billboard, a giant color photograph of a grinning black child in the cockpit of a jet, a white-skinned captain placing his flight cap upon the boy's head. "You see how that pickney smilin'?" Wavell said. "It's not 'cause he wearin' the big mon's hat. It's 'cause the big mon goin' to fly him outta this place." ●

DOUGLAS W. PAYNE is a New York-based writer.

To Our Contributors

A few suggestions:

(1) Be sure to keep a copy of your manuscript. And please remember that we can't consider articles unless they're accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

(2) Please don't write to ask whether we're interested in such and such an article—it makes for useless correspondence. Look at our last few issues to see if your idea fits in. Or take a chance and send us your article. We will not consider manuscripts submitted simultaneously to several publications.

(3) Type your ms *double-spaced*, with *wide* margins. Check all your figures, dates, names, etc.—they're the author's responsibility. Use WordPerfect 5.1 or standard ASCII text format, and send us the disk. Please use inclusive language so that we don't have to make adjustments during editing. If you are submitting to *Dissent* electronically, our e-mail address is dissent@igc.apc.org.

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(5) We're usually quick in giving editorial decisions. If there's a delay, it's because a few editors are reading your article.

THE EDITORS

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Crime in Latin America

Forrest D. Colburn

SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA : The telephone rang; Danilo said, "Hello."

"This is Bam-Bam. I hear you have lost something."

"Yes, my car was stolen."

"If you authorize me, *if you authorize me*, I will look for it, providing that you pay me a reward of $2,500 if I am successful in finding it."

Danilo agreed. Three days later Bam-Bam called and told him that his car had been found and that Danilo must bring $2,500 in cash to a specified location. Danilo had two friends, Noel and John, who had recovered their stolen cars after paying a "ransom." But he was still surprised by Bam-Bam's audacity when they met:

"Before you pay me, let us inspect the car to make sure there is no damage."

There was no damage; Danilo handed over the cash.

"Before you go, let me give you some tips on how to protect your car against future theft—although I personally guarantee that your car will not be stolen in the next six months." Prominent among his tips was the installation of an alarm, which Bam-Bam said could be done at a local shop where, he concluded, "You can tell them Bam-Bam sent you and you will get a 30 percent discount."

It was true; Danilo got a 30 percent discount.

Bam-Bam, a handsome young man with a ponytail, was finally arrested and given a modest prison sentence. His "business" had soured only because he became such a celebrated figure—to the point of being asked for his autograph on the streets of San José—that the authorities had to act.

Although Danilo could find some humor in his costly encounter with Bam-Bam, other "kidnappings" in Latin America are not so benign. Stefano drove up to the still-charming Mexican city of Taxco and was abducted at gunpoint. His captors took him to a nearby mountain and chained him to a tree, keeping a machine gun aimed at his throat, feeding him cans of tuna fish. His family was asked to pay two million dollars for his release. The family asked for a more manageable sum. The kidnappers sliced off a section of his left ear, which they sent to the family. A telephone call threatened that a finger would be next, then a hand, and so forth. Stefano's father, Alberto, contacted the authorities. The governor of the state of Guerrero paid a visit of consolation, but the police were of no help, unable even to tap the phone line. A ransom was finally agreed upon, and Alberto divided the money (nearly all borrowed), as he was instructed, into two piles: half the sum in pesos and the other half in dollars. Twenty-two days after being abducted, Stefano was released, an emotional wreck.

Stefano's saga is far from an isolated case. This past year there have been, according to the governor, over a hundred *reported* kidnappings in the state of Guerrero. Other states and the Federal District, home of Mexico City, also report a surge in kidnappings and other violent crimes. Indeed, Mexico City is now one of the most dangerous cities in the world. The wave of kidnappings is notable because this crime is rare in most wealthy countries, where good police work makes it all but impossible for perpetrators to avoid capture. Kidnappings, whether of late-model Toyotas or children, are so common in contemporary Latin America at least in part because of the absence of competent police.

In many Latin American countries, from Mexico to Argentina, there is, in fact, the sus-

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picion that the police collaborate or even participate in such violent crimes as kidnappings, as well as more prosaic robberies. Shortly after Stefano's release, the chief of the neighboring state of Morelos and two of his aides were arrested as they prepared to dump a corpse along a road in Guerrero—the tortured body of a seventeen-year-old member of a kidnapping gang. Mexico's attorney general's office opened an investigation into the Morelos police, declaring that "it appears these individuals are involved in the protection of gangs dedicated to kidnapping and to narcotics trafficking." Guerrero is likely no different; the police there just take offense at their state being used as a "body dump."

ALTHOUGH DATA on crime are often problematic, figures published by the World Bank confirm anecdotal evidence that crime is a serious—and growing—problem in Latin America. Colombia's murder rate is nine times as high as that of the United States. Guatemala and El Salvador's rates are fourteen times as high. In ten of the thirteen countries in Latin America that keep credible records, crime has increased substantially in the last ten to fifteen years. For example, in Panama and Peru homicides have multiplied by a factor of five. And in countries like Honduras and Ecuador, where kidnappings and extortion were rare, such crimes are now common.

A recent World Bank study titled "Institutional Obstacles for Doing Business" surveyed 3,600 entrepreneurs in 69 countries. Latin American respondents had the highest rate of concern about theft and other kinds of crime: 90 percent of respondents stated that crime is a serious problem. Moreover, 80 percent of respondents in Latin America reported that they did not feel confident that the state authorities protected them and their property from criminals. They reported, too, that personal safety and the security of property had decreased over the last decade. When presented with a long list of potential obstacles to their activities, business leaders in Latin America reported that their gravest problems are: (1) corruption, (2) inadequate infrastructure, and (3) theft and other crimes. If one defines corruption as nothing more than "theft and other crimes" by public officials, then the dimensions of the problem are truly staggering. Correspondingly, those interviewed in Latin America expressed little confidence in the region's judiciary system.

Crime in Latin America is widespread, a plague on all classes, including the poor. In the slums of Caracas, Venezuela, armed robbers take the shoes from the feet of pedestrians. Those who resist are murdered. (The murder rate in Caracas has increased fivefold in ten years.) In my rural neighborhood of Dulce Nombre in Costa Rica, even the local church was burglarized; the priest's microphone and vestments were stolen (the neighborhood reaction: "The thieves will pass directly to hell").

How can this surge in crime be explained? Didn't the 1980s and early 1990s bring an end to thirty years of ideological conflict, of militarism, civil wars, and authoritarianism? Hasn't there been an embrace of democracy and economic reform in Latin America? Isn't the region supposed to be off to a good start, finally, on the right road? It is understandable, surely, that there is still poverty, difficult to eradicate even with the best of economic models and with high rates of economic growth. But why is there such a dramatic increase in crime throughout the region, in countries as different from one another as Mexico, Costa Rica, Peru, and Argentina? Are there parallels with Russia and South Africa, two countries that have also recently made sweeping political and economic transitions and that also suffer from an increase in crime, much of it violent?

Ann Bernstein, a South African long involved in the struggle against apartheid and now director of the Center for Development and Enterprise in Johannesburg, has a number of explanations for why crime has dramatically increased in South Africa: (1) apartheid created criminals and fostered crime; (2) the movement away from authoritarian rule left weakened institutions unable to fight crime—a poorly trained and ill-paid police force, and judicial and penal systems sorely in need of reform; and (3) democracy, with its attendant liberalization, creates an "opening" for all sorts of activities, including criminal activity.

Her explanations for South Africa are sug-

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gestive also for Latin America. Guerrilla movements, civil wars, and military governments all led to violence. Some guerrillas and some members of the "security apparatus" have continued to do the only thing they know how to do—use a gun. The rule of law was weak in the region's military governments, and those regimes have bequeathed to today's democracies antiquated laws, poorly trained police forces, and weak judiciary systems. Perhaps, too, the greater freedoms afforded by democracy, and the attendant constraints on coercion, have been exploited by those tempted by the quick gains of crime.

This set of explanations is intuitively plausible. But how does one explain the rise in crime even in those countries with a history of democracy; namely, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Venezuela (and perhaps, too, the Dominican Republic)? Alternative explanations are offered. Perhaps fault lies with the "neoliberal" economic model, which has curbed the role of the state and increased, in turn, the role of markets. Despite the gain of greater macroeconomic stability, especially in the control of inflation, there have been costs: battered social programs, rising unemployment, heightened income inequality, and the championing of a crass materialism. So, the reasoning goes, if you can't get wealthy through privatization of state assets or through buying shares in a shopping mall, you will be tempted to rob someone.

Others argue that what is decisive about the neoliberal model is not its economic import, but the extent to which "state capacity" has been undermined, or at least neglected. Although it may be advisable to scale back the state's role in the economy, that should not be taken to mean—as it frequently has—that a weak state is desirable. What is needed is a "lean but strong" state, capable of fulfilling the traditional responsibilities of government, including, prominently, the provision of public order.

A different explanation for the rise in crime is based on culture: the collapse of the family; dislocations from mass migration and rapid population growth; the lack of civic education; the secularization of society; and, among other similarly diffuse forces, the spread of anti-civic norms from the United States, with its "gangsta rap," gangs, drug culture, and rampant consumerism. It seems facile to connect the introduction of MTV music videos with rising crime. But there are ingrained norms and practices in many parts of Latin America that do work against the rule of law and that may provide an amoral staging ground for criminal activity. In Argentina people joke that the national sport is tax evasion. In Brazil there is an expression, "For my friends, everything; for my enemies, the law!" In Ecuador the saying is, "The law is for the poncho [that is, the impoverished Indians who wear them]." Corruption in many public institutions, ministries, agencies, even police forces, is endemic. For example, a study conducted in 1996 by Mexico's Secretariat of Administrative Development and Oversight, based on anonymous interviews with police and on payroll information, indicated that police, who earn less than $350 a month, spend four times their wages. The majority of rank-and-file police interviewed said that if they did not rob ordinary citizens and steal from—as well as collaborate with—criminals, they would be unable to support their families. Those interviewed added that they were not overly concerned with the image they projected; their priority was money.

WHAT IS to be done? Before assuming office as mayor of Mexico City, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas of the center-left Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) announced that security would be his top priority. A former mayor of Mexico City said that trying to do anything in Mexico City was like trying to service a jet in midflight and, in fact, success has to date eluded Cárdenas. But he is one of the few ranking public officials in the region to recognize publicly the importance of crime. The pernicious effect of crime on economic development is mostly ignored, as is the extent to which democracy's legitimacy depends on its ability to solve problems. Greater attention to crime is needed throughout the region; public officials need to think hard about how the surge in crime can be reversed.

It would be easier to proceed if we knew just why crime has risen in the last ten to fifteen years in Latin America. But there are

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competing explanations and no way to prove their relative merits. And, in any case, the prominent theories suggest Herculean projects: ending poverty or transforming the culture. The only viable short-run policy seems to be effective law enforcement. Citizens don't engage in crime for two reasons: (1) the coercive power of the state and (2) the moral authority of the state. The first has been weakened in Latin America by the transition from authoritarianism to democracy and the second has yet to be established by the new democracies. Building the moral authority of the state is an ambitious and long-term endeavor. So the burden for now falls on making the coercive power more consistent, fair, and effective.

Given the sorry condition of many of the police forces and judicial systems in the region, this task cannot be accomplished just by adding to the ranks of the police; and it is dangerous to augment their ranks with personnel from the armed forces, as has been tried in Mexico and Brazil. Police forces have to be completely rebuilt and judicial systems overhauled—these are among the first reforms that democratic rulers must seek. ●

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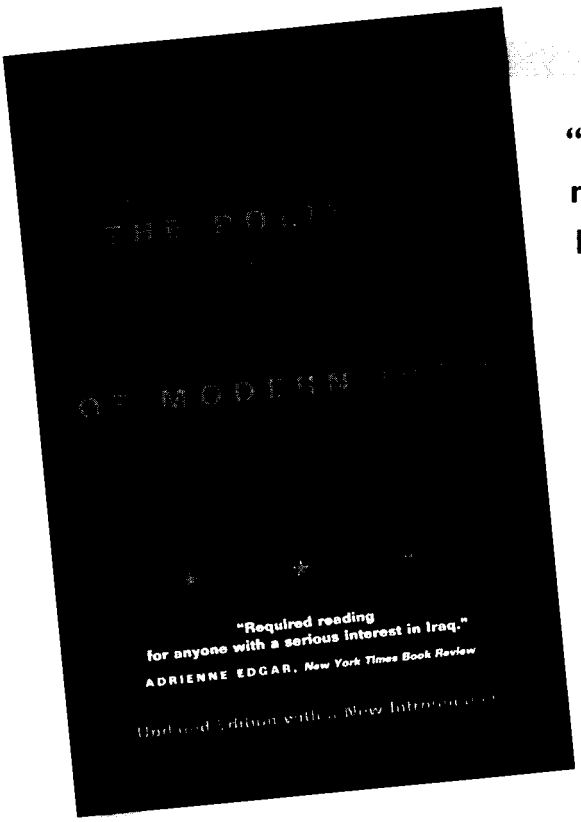

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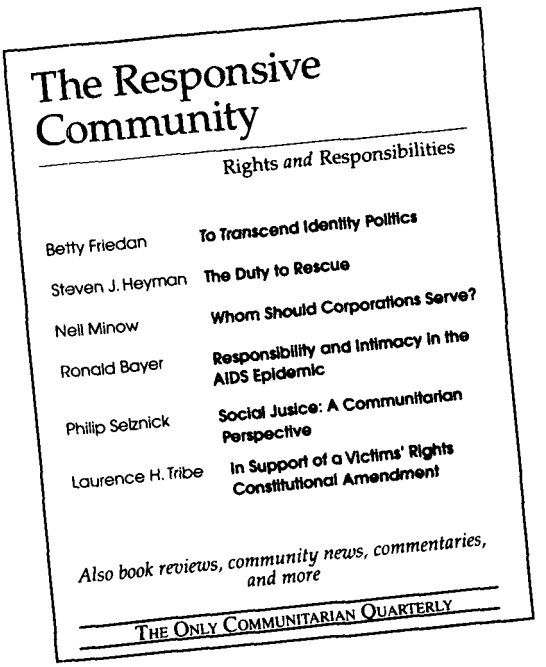
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Is Democracy Good for Unions?

Steve Fraser

Ron Carey's recent downfall as head of the Teamsters Union carried with it genuine overtones of tragedy. His ascension to the presidency some years ago seemed just reward for his own incorruptible dedication to the rank and file and for the indefatigable efforts of the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), which contributed immeasurably to his rise. Then came the stirring victory over United Parcel Service last summer, an inspiration to all who look to a resurgent labor movement to help prevent the final "incorporation of America." A victory for democracy inside the country's most notoriously corrupt union had led, or so it seemed, to a victory for democracy for all. So when it turned out that Carey was going down, implicated in, of all things, a scam to manipulate his re-election through the misappropriation of union funds, it was dispiriting news indeed.

But this scandal is also a reminder that union democracy has been, for nearly a century, a quixotic crusade pursued, oddly enough, with comparable fervor and little success by both right and left. Today, Ron Carey's disgrace provokes as much lamentation in the columns of the *Wall Street Journal* as it does in the slimmer pages of *New Politics*, both journals saddened and outraged by yet another defeat for the cause of union democracy. This dirge has been heard before . . . and even before that. Already by the turn of the century, Daniel DeLeon, Socialist Labor Party and Industrial Workers of the World founder, had skewered the conventional trade union leader as a "hopelessly gangrened" appendage of the capitalist octopus. Such functionaries were in his eyes inherently corrupt, ruling their fiefdoms much like machine politicians, without any regard for the democratic desires of their constituents. They were, in a word, "traitors." This became an article of faith for assorted left-wing socialists, anarchists, and syndicalists. In some form it remains so to this day, encouraging among a diminished circle of left-wing trade union activists a sense of their own righteousness.

Echoing across the great social divide, the voices of business lobbyists, conservative politicians, and establishment journalists mimicked DeLeon's. Early in this century, anthracite coal barons took up the cause of union democracy, complaining that "the voice of the great majority of the rank and file of the miners . . . can only make itself felt through a more democratic management of the union." Union leaders were "autocratic" and "corrupt" "bosses" who needed to be unhorsed by the secret ballot and guarantees of freedom of expression and majority rule. During World War II, when the reputation and political weight of the trade union movement was in the ascendant, labor's congressional enemies mounted oblique attacks by citing union violations of democratic procedure. This salient became the dominant one in the managerial counterrevolution that immediately followed the war. Taft-Hartley began and Landrum-Griffin concluded, a decade later, a legislative effort whose ostensible purpose was to democratize trade unionism, but whose unspoken agenda was to reverse the balance of power between business and labor established during the New Deal. Today, Representative Peter Hoekstra of Michigan conducts hearings to ventilate the right wing's concern with the lack of democracy in the Teamsters and other unions, and to promote the Paycheck Protection Act. Worried that for the first time in a

I would like to thank Nelson Lichtenstein and Joshua Freeman for their critical reading and important suggestions for this article. —S.F.

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quarter century the labor movement might be recovering just a bit of its wasted political muscle, the act would require individual workers to agree to the political deployment of their dues money. Making it more difficult than it already is for unions to take decisive political action, it's a piece of pure legislative hypocrisy promoted as a democratic reform to "give workers a say."

So it's been: union democracy cherished by the left as the passway to social emancipation; discovered by the right as the passway to social counterrevolution. *On the Waterfront* was an ecumenical docudrama with enough meat on the bone to satisfy everyone: Catholic activists, trade union militants, good-government bureaucrats, responsible businesspeople, the whole family of upstanding citizens. This convergence should not obscure certain contrary elemental truths. First of all and most obviously, the motives of left and right crusaders for union democracy could not be more at odds. Clearly, in the case of the latter we are in the presence of a calculated cynicism. The clusters of Republican congresspeople and corporate flacks who staffed, testified before, and applauded the 1957 McClellan Senate committee hearings into union racketeering (five of the eight senators were from right-to-work states) and who muscled through the Landrum-Griffin Act (otherwise known as the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959) were about as interested in fostering "labor reform" and the democratic rights of the rank and file as King Leopold was in fostering humanitarian good works on the rubber and ivory plantations of the Belgian Congo. If union democracy appealed to them at all, it did so because they thought it might weaken the internal unity and resolve of trade unions. It is hardly a coincidence that Landrum-Griffin was passed during the 116-day steel strike—the longest industry shutdown ever.

Partisans of union democracy from the left, on the other hand, were and are motivated by a genuine commitment to one or another version of social democracy, a commitment that can be moral, strategic, or both. For the most zealous, union democracy can become a consuming preoccupation, effacing all other considerations, assuming mythic stature. But even then its disciples redeem themselves by a dedication to the disempowered that exposes the sanctimonious cant of faux union democrats on the right.

So, too, the passions aroused by union democracy on the left and right do not cancel each other out, rendering the issue moot. All sorts of trade unions at various times and in a great variety of industries have been hopelessly corrupt and autocratically run, ready to resort to everything from the quiet, if systematic, misappropriation and looting of rank-and-file dues money to the most brutal repression of internal dissent. Nor, for that matter, are corruption and autocracy inevitably joined at the hip: Jimmy Hoffa (the disappeared one) meticulously observed all the provisions of Landrum-Griffin; Walter Reuther, who could rise to heights of imperial ruthlessness in dealing with his opponents, was the soul of rectitude when it came to conducting the business affairs of the United Auto Workers (UAW). No, union democracy, or rather its absence, is an all-too-chronic conundrum. Its persistence lends moral and political legitimacy even to such legal remedies as Landrum-Griffin, whose provenance is otherwise so transparently antilabor.

And yet it is also the case that there is no other voluntary, mass organization in America subject to the same intense scrutiny of its internal life, so regularly inspected, interrogated, and indicted with regard to how closely it conforms to democratic norms of conduct. Neck deep in its own failures and betrayals, corruptions and bad faith, the American trade union nonetheless survives on the barren landscape of civil society as a great, if battered, multicultural institution embracing the powerless and disenfrancised; one of a precious few actually capable of challenging the power and privilege of the country's business and political elites. If there is no democracy within unions, there is no democracy without them.

Evolved to cohabit a modern world of complex, bureaucratic organization, the trade union is as far from the vanished and much mythologized world of guild democracy as today's hollowed-out mass political parties and administrative state agencies are from the

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equally sentimentalized world of participatory village democracy. To decry that leads nowhere. Moreover, unions, unlike other popular formations, are compelled to assume multiple and not always compatible roles: as vehicles of democratic expression and mobilization, as a kind of diplomatic corps engaged in closeted negotiation, as combat organizations imposing a solidaristic discipline with which to confront a centralized enemy utterly unconcerned with niceties of democratic procedure. Under such conditions, many union leaders secretly believe and practice what one of them openly confessed back in the 1920s: "As a democracy no union would last six months."

THAT INHERENT functional tension is heightened by the peculiarities of American political and industrial history. The labor movement's failure to form political institutions of its own (a labor or social democratic party of some description) and its inability or unwillingness to erect a system of industry-wide bargaining, have left trade unions to bear multiple burdens. They must function as private welfare states in lieu of government supports, which even at their most generous were hardly generous at all. Sitting atop a large stash of cash in the form of pension and other benefits is not only a temptation in the crudest sense. It is as well an alluring source of influence, opening up the back channels of power and high finance to people hardly accustomed to such access. Unions must function as well like more or less autonomous political deal makers. Because no "labor party" consistently looks after its broader interests, each union is, in many instances, left to fend for itself, its leaders wheeling and dealing with local power brokers. Such political understandings may be necessary and fair—or they may not be. But in any event they can be dangerous intoxicants for the bureaucrats who negotiate them, especially because they know they're not accountable in the way they might be for more formal agreements entered into by a political party. Finally, because industry-wide or regional bargaining is such a rarity in the United States, unions too often find themselves competing against one another. Such internecine competition invites corrupt dealings with businesses always looking for an edge. All in all, union bureaucrats are presented with proliferating incentives to hold onto power and opportunites to enrich themselves well beyond what might be defined as "normal." This structural dynamic of American trade unionism accounts, in part at least, for why the crusade for union democracy seems interminable and interminably futile. The Association for Union Democracy, for example, has been waging the good fight for a half century; although there have been some highs, and especially some very grim lows, in the end it would be hard to argue much has changed over that span.

Even though American unions have consistently shied away from establishing a political existence of their own, critics have tended to treat unions as if they were incipient labor parties. They implicitly demand of the former beliefs, principles, and programmatic platforms only reasonable to expect of social democratic political formations. Since, however, they are trade unions, they consistently disappoint. So, for example, when it comes to the labor market, trade unions are natural monopolists prone to defend the interests and express the democratic will of their existing members by excluding others; in America that has meant (and in an alarming number of instances continues to mean) immigrants, blacks, and women. And the question of union democracy is made even murkier by the undeniable record of some union leaders' taking the initiative to end exclusionary practices only to be democratically repudiated by a rank and file jealous of its privileges. Similarly, what's often passed over in all the hand-wringing about the Teamster situation is that Jimmy Hoffa (the live one) enjoyed widespread support, nearly enough to win the election, even before it was known that Ron Carey had made his pact with the devil. Indeed, there would have been no devilish pact to begin with had not a worrying percentage of the rank and file displayed its pro-Hoffa sentiments. That, too, is a less attractive face of union democracy, which won't go away by demonizing Hoffa.

Allegorical depictions of the struggle for union democracy depend on a fanciful and ahistorical polarity between a virginal rank and

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file and a venal bureaucracy. If anything good happens, its source can always be found deep in the soil where the grass roots grow. And if things don't turn out as wished, if the ranks recede and fall silent, there's always a bureaucrat around to blame.

This simple tale of betrayal has been told over and over again, reaching a kind of tragic grandeur as an explanation for the rise and then the sad demise of the CIO as an insurgent force in American life. And it is undeniable that many unions degenerated in just this way, presided over by incompetents, crooks, petty tyrants, or just plain timeservers whose ties to the workaday world of their "clients" had gone extinct. But whatever truth this larger folklore may contain—and clearly there is some—it effaces a more complex historical logic. Whether in the case of the CIO or in other instances of genuine democratic labor insurgency, the hated bureaucracy emerges again and again as an outgrowth of the upheaval from below. The rank and file is complicit in the creation of the bureaucracy; the bureaucracy is its legitimate offspring, at least in the case of strong CIO-like upheavals. A powerful bureaucracy often signals the strength of its anonymous creators down below. The fact that they were able to fashion an institution capable of standing up to an enemy whose overlordship went unquestioned for so long is an accomplishment, not a mistake or failing.

Frequently formed under beleaguered conditions, it's hardly a surprise the union executive is vested with extraordinary powers, not dissimilar to a nation under siege and prone to the same suspension of full democratic liberties. (After all, the union shop is a kind of compulsory form of solidarity.) Except that in America there's hardly ever a truce, much less a lasting peace, in the war against unions. Union functionaries, certainly in the formative period and sometimes well beyond that, are themselves the most combat-hardened, articulate, politically alert, and devoted of democratic activists. In a word, especially when the bureaucracy arises amidst the Sturm and Drang of industrial warfare, it represents not the worst but the best the movement has to offer.

THE AMALGAMATED CLOTHING WORKERS (ACW), a union about whose history I've written, pioneered in democratizing industrial relations in an industry notorious for its wild disregard for the needs and rights of its workforce. Before unemployment insurance and subsidized housing became public policy, the Amalgamated had established these democratic reforms in its own domain. And the internal life of the union, at the local level and sometimes beyond, was lively and contentious. Its bureaucracy was largely, although certainly not exclusively, peopled by veteran activists, a sizeable percentage committed social revolutionaries of one sort or another. Yet there is no question the union was often run without regard to formal democratic procedure. What was colloquially known as "the activity," an informal cluster of the most tested and trusted cadre, made key strategic and even lesser decisions. And they were not shy about thwarting the will of local majorities. So they might act to curb the appetites of powerful groups of skilled cutters or to censor factional opponents in ways not prescribed by the union's bylaws. When, to cite an admittedly extreme case, pro-fascist sentiment swelled inside certain Italian locals during the late 1920s and 1930s, the "activity" made sure this noxious voice was silenced. The UAW was a similar case. The fruit of mass upheaval, staffed by cadre with unimpeachable credentials, famous for its freewheeling internal debates, like the ACW an innovator in democratic social reform, and led by a man who might be characterized as a union ascetic, the UAW bureaucracy, under Reuther's command, could also be ruthless in pursuit of its own objectives. The UAW was a one-party state whose challengers, when they dared to raise their heads, might just as readily find themselves in trusteeship as campaigning for election.

From the time of DeLeon and continuing into the late 1960s with the eruption of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement and related movements of black workers, internal dissent against union leaders often carried with it a social charge, the explicit promise that the struggle for democracy inside the house of labor was part of the broader confrontation with capitalism and social injustice. Union de-

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mocracy thereby became a cause attracting the attention of the wider progressive community. That is scarcely the case today. Red purges and Republican-instigated investigations into "labor racketeering" have left behind an unsavory aroma. Together they've made union democracy the official business of the government. Conservatives feel comfortable with that because they're always able to overcome their qualms about government interference so long as the state's punitive gaze is directed at the enemies of good business and good order. But across the aisle the role of the government in labor matters is viewed more suspiciously. Whatever the past machinations of Stalinists within the labor movement, it is hard to ignore the high hypocrisy that justified the government's intimidating campaign to excise them from the CIO; anticommunist affidavits and star-chamber excommunications were all about crippling the labor movement, not about saving the CIO for democracy. And whatever the truth about criminal infiltration of trade unions—and it was considerable—the image of "labor bossism" with which it was deliberately conflated was more a publicist's poison arrow than it was an antidote for union autocracy. Only the most dogged persistence by union oppositionists, as for example in the case of the long campaign in the sixties to unseat the David McDonald gang running the Steelworkers, succeeded; and it did so in spite of, as much as because of, the presence of Landrum-Griffin monitors from the Labor Department.

So, too, today the government's own views and personnel quickly take precedence over the putative interests of the rank and file it's supposed to be protecting. Standards applied by federal agents to the internal life of unions are tortuously more exacting than for any other arena of public life. Why should the government, after all, be deciding who can run for union office, how and when the elections are to be held, whether or not a union president ought to be elected directly by its members or, as is far more common, by convention delegates? Direct elections, for example, seem eminently democratic, but on closer inspection often turn out to replicate the devitalized practices of contemporary electoral politics, complete with high stakes fund-raising and sound-bite electioneering. Again, the byzantine intrigue that has engulfed officials assigned to monitor and adjudicate the Teamster case is a splendid demonstration of how union democracy under the auspices of the government easily turns into a beltway political brawl that has precious little, if anything, to do with the aspirations of the much-revered rank and file.

All these bedevilments of the crusade for union democracy have registered finally even among those most single-mindedly committed to it as an overriding axiom of their political lives. Once upon a time the direct (rather than convention-delegate) election of union presidents, the tethering of local business agents to their immediate constituents, and similar expressions of direct democracy were considered the elementary forms of the good union. But the all too evident ability of locally elected business agents, for example—even those without any taint of corruption—to frustrate the will and interests of larger majorities outside their local precincts has cultivated a greater respect for the specific contingencies of living unions and a more fluid, less fixed regard for the forms of procedural democracy. This new flexibility embraces the government's role as well; sometimes it's seen as good, sometimes not so good. Still, there is an abiding sense that whatever rises from below is genuine and progressive; whatever percolates down from above, even if it looks enticing, is to be dealt with, if at all, with kid gloves. Only movements led by rank-and-file militants, only organizers from within and not from the outside, can be trusted to push to the limit and beyond. The recent important victory of the Communications Workers of America at USAir is cited as evidence. There the conversion of workers into activists/organizers made all the difference.

In this compelling scenario democracy, meaning the active involvement and leadership of shop-floor workers, is merged with all hope of resuscitating the labor movement. Only the impure of heart could disagree. Arousing the energies and ideas of working people normally left inert by the tyrannies and indignities of everyday life on the job is not merely smart

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strategy, although it is that; intrinsically, it is an assault on the hierarchies of power and wealth and social position that root and reproduce in the dark world of production, a realm from which all talk of democracy is officially banished. Here, too, "union democracy" flies the flag of multiculturalism, overturning all the disabling divisions of race and ethnicity that poison the well of fellow feeling and collective action. And here as well "union democracy" breaches the fire walls protecting a favored skill or gender or nativity, daring to open up enclaves of union privilege to the more capacious embrace of working and poor people generally. It is here, finally, that "union democracy" blends seamlessly into social movement building, seeking to articulate desires extending far beyond the borders circumscribed by conventional trade unionism. The boundaries of the institution become plastic, allowing easy migrations back and forth between unions and community organizations as they mobilize jointly to confront the corporate order at and away from work. Down this road lies the permanent revolution, a state of perpetual industrial and social ferment, severing as well the umbilical cord to the Democratic Party, all of which sooner or later must undermine the ground beneath the existing order of things. Somewhere down this road the "union" in "union democracy" drops out, antiquated, as in no longer necessary or adequate.

BETWEEN HERE and there, however, the institution soldiers on, as does the intractable reality of contesting for power in the marketplace and in the political arena. In this intermediate zone, the relationship of power to democracy is complex, full of compromise and negotiation and even concession. There are some trade union leaders today—and they include people utterly devoted to organizing, tactically creative and militant, and who've achieved remarkable success against daunting odds in the South and elsewhere—who don't care a rat's ass for union democracy; indeed consider it an actual hindrance where a state of undeclared war against employers demands discipline, secrecy, and decisive action by small groups of outsiders less subject to daily intimidation. From afar it's all too easy to declaim against this preoccupation with institutional power while failing to take account of the precariousness with which these institutions cling to life.

Still others in positions of leaderhip have fashioned a more nuanced relationship between power and democracy. Recent developments in, of all places, the building trades, are suggestive. The reform regime presiding over the Carpenters Union in New England warns against union democracy proceeding in a vacuum as a kind of narrowly focused procedural matter, all the while eliding the question of power and the active involvement of members in ongoing organizing from the equation. Traditionally, local fiefdoms in the Carpenters Union were simultaneously democratic and disempowering. They've remained hotbeds of a living culture of solidarity, a "brotherhood" of sentiment and skill—a phenomenon far rarer in the labor movement generally than it once was and therefore not to be sneezed at. Yet these locals and their leaders (not only in the Carpenters but throughout the building trades) jealously guarded their parochial (often racist and sexist) prerogatives and labor-market monopolies even as the center of gravity of the industry regionalized. To stop the erosion of union power as well as to undermine the ability of local chieftains to frustrate the larger needs of the region's workers, reform meant centralization. Local leaders became accountable to a larger regional structure congruent with the industry's. Democracy in some sense suffered as locals lost some power and control over their own affairs.

But the process of regionalization and centralization was not accomplished by some ukase from above. Rather, encouraging activism at the grass roots was the most effective ally of democratic reform. COMET (Constuction Organizing and Membership Education and Training) is a program aimed at enlisting the ranks in an ongoing campaign against the old forms of exclusivist democracy. It has of course bolstered the position of the new leadership, but at the same time seems a legitimate approach to inviting real membership participation in important union affairs. Similarly, the 1988 grassroots campaign in Massachusetts around the prevailing wage law mo-

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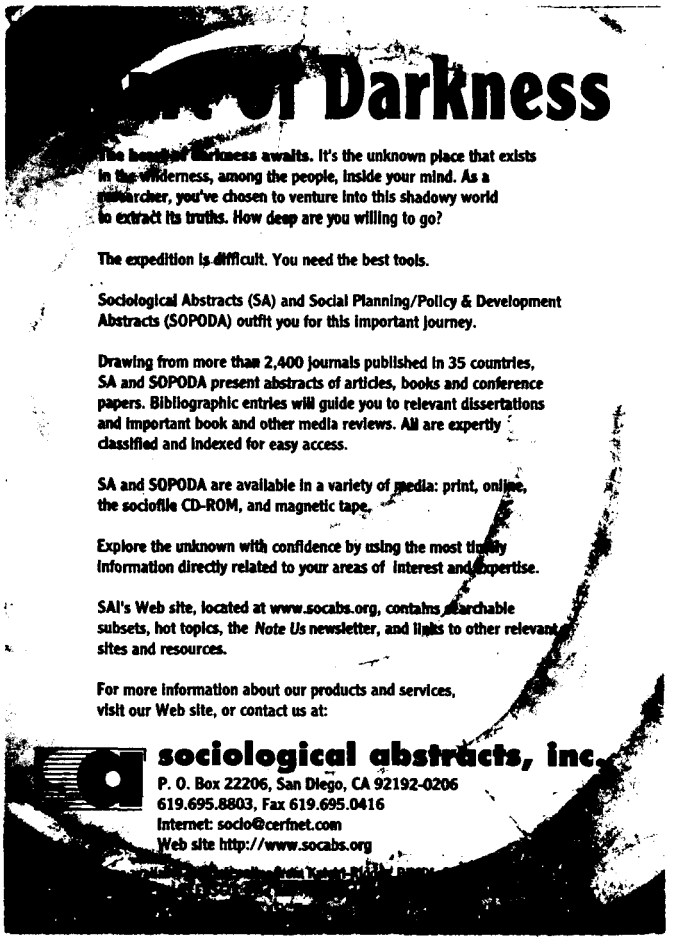
bilized twenty thousand people in all the building trades, which together led the way for the rest of the labor movement and established alliances between Massachusetts trade unionists and other community organizations in the state. Without exaggerating what was accomplished, the Carpenters' démarche is invigorating, breaking through the encrusted insularity of the old order, widening the sphere of democratic participation and social interaction. Like-minded efforts at democratic reform from above and below that simultaneously wrestle with the shifting configuration of power in the "market" have marked recent developments in the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), in the "Union Cities" strategy most conspicuously successful in Las Vegas and elsewhere.

A labor movement far more inclusive, tactically daring, and politically independent than what we have today is a prerequisite of serious democratic advance. Just how such a labor movement qua social movement is apt to emerge, however, is not prescribed nor neatly described by otherwise unobjectionable formulations about mass organization and union democracy. The relationship between power and democracy has never been a straightforward one. It may be morally consoling, but nothing more, to cling to the illusion of their easy reconciliation. ●

STEVE FRASER is the author of *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* and is co-editor of *Audacious Democracy: Labor, Intellectuals and the Social Transformation of America*. He is a founder of Scholars, Artists, and Writers for Social Justice.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The Environment-Security Trap

Ken Conca

THE THREATS we face today as Americans respect no nation's borders. Think of them: terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, organized crime, drug trafficking, ethnic and religious hatred, aggression by rogue states, environmental degradation." This passage from Bill Clinton's 1996 State of the Union address places environmental problems squarely alongside America's most popular post–cold war enemies. The addition of environmental degradation to these market-tested demons is no accident. Despite its weak performance on environmental cooperation, the administration has undertaken a concerted effort to repackage the environment as a security issue. Although sometimes touted by environmentalists as a way to generate attention and action, the linking of environmental problems to national security and "strategic" American interests is deeply troubling. It distorts the problem, blurs underlying responsibility, legitimizes coercion, and diverts attention from where action is most badly needed.

American environmentalism follows the times. In the 1960s a progressive, grassroots movement elbowed its way to the table next to the staid conservation organizations of an earlier era. The go-go 1980s saw the emergence of free-market environmentalism; pollution permits became a fashionable instrument of policy; and the vague yet comforting idea of "sustainability" promised that we could have nature's cake and eat it, too. But if the 1980s were about unfettered growth and cowboy economics, the watchword for the 1990s has been insecurity. Its hallmarks are economic anxiety, a steep decline in America's self-image as an affluent society, the rise of anti-immigrant xenophobia, and a desire to be insulated from turbulent change. Predictably, we hear more and more tough talk about "environmental security," which frames the planet's ills not as a shared problem facing humanity but rather as a threat to American strategic interests.

Some environmental advocates have always been willing to use national-security rhetoric to sell their policy prescriptions. In the 1970s proponents of solar energy sometimes argued that nuclear plants, refineries, and large power stations were vulnerable to terrorists or the Russians. During the Reagan years the World Resources Institute, a well-heeled environmental think tank, published a report by tropical forest guru Norman Myers, who warned of environmental threats to the stability of such staunchly anticommunist "friends" as Moi's Kenya, Marcos's Philippines, and Numeiry's Sudan. A widely cited 1989 *Foreign Affairs* article by Jessica Tuchman Mathews (currently president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) warned, "If . . . resource and population trends are not addressed, as they are not in so much of the world today, the resulting economic decline leads to frustration, resentment, domestic unrest or even civil war. Human suffering and turmoil make countries ripe for authoritarian government or external subversion." But it is in the Clinton era that environment-security thinking has reached critical mass. The combined force of scholarly research, bureaucratic incentives, and a not-so-gentle push from the administration is raising environmental security to influential heights in U.S. foreign-policy circles.

Both scholarly research and common sense suggest that environmental degradation and violence are indeed linked. Research efforts such as the Project on Environment, Population, and Security at the University of Toronto

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and the Environment and Conflicts Project sponsored by the Swiss Peace Foundation project a disturbing trend in which resource competition and ecological marginalization lead to widening social conflict, particularly in the world's poorer regions. As the Toronto group concluded: "Environmental scarcity can contribute to population movements, economic decline, and weakened states, which in turn can cause ethnic conflicts, insurgencies, and coups d'état."

A CITIZEN MIGHT reasonably take such warnings as further proof that security policy in today's America has little to do with genuine human security. It might even lead one to ask whether we need a serious rethinking of what is meant by national security. Unfortunately, this potential rethinking is being diverted into a more manageable lesson about the threat of political instability in the third world. Thus Paul Kennedy and colleagues identify nine large third world nations as "pivotal" and warn that "The threats to the pivotal states are not communism or aggression but rather overpopulation, migration, environmental degradation, ethnic conflict, and economic instability." They place "the 'dirty' industrialization of the developing world, unchecked population growth and attendant migratory pressures" at the head of the list of "new threats to American national interests." Similarly, Lester Brown, well known for his annual *State of the World* reports, wonders "Who will feed China?" and warns that China's heavy cropland losses, water scarcity, and soil erosion, combined with population growth and surging food demand, will "tip the world balance from surplus to scarcity."

These and other projections linking environmental problems to third world violence, economic instability, and political chaos have provided rhetorical fuel for several constituencies: liberal arms controllers seeking new themes as they confront structural unemployment in the post–cold war era; environmentalists who still believe in capturing a slice of the illusory peace dividend; and bureaucratic entrepreneurs seeking a new mission for the defense and intelligence communities. A series of reports from the Environmental Change and Security Project of the Woodrow Wilson Center charts the rising tide: environmental security initiatives at the Departments of State, Defense, and Energy, the intelligence agencies, and the Environmental Protection Administration; foundation programs from Pew, MacArthur, Rockefeller, and W. Alton Jones; major speeches on the theme by the secretary of state, senior Pentagon officials, and the director of Central Intelligence; more than thirty recent academic conferences; and scores of books and articles.

The drumbeat raised by this coalition of academics, think tankers, foundations, and bureaucrats plays to the foreign policy establishment's fears about mounting disorder in the politically turbulent and economically polarized second and third worlds. It also converges neatly with geopolitical sloganeering about "failed" and "pivotal" states. And the music is being heard at the highest levels of the Clinton administration. Vice President Gore's 1992 book, *Earth in the Balance*, argued that global environmental problems, like the threat of war, could mobilize society to make changes in industrial practices, consumption patterns, and public policies. Gore invoked the struggles against Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia as precedents, and he described environmentalists around the world as "a new kind of resistance fighter." The president himself was apparently much influenced by "The Coming Anarchy," a Robert Kaplan essay in the February 1994 *Atlantic Monthly*. Kaplan used scholarly speculations on the future of violent conflict, including the work of Samuel Huntington, Thomas Homer-Dixon, and Martin van Creveld, as a lens for his travels in West Africa. The article portrayed the region, and by extension the third world, as a nightmarish realm of overpopulation, mounting environmental degradation, urban squalor, and escalating social violence. In remarks to the National Academy of Sciences, Clinton described himself as "gripped" by Kaplan's lurid travelogue: "[If] you really look at what's going on, you could visualize a world in which a few million of us live in such opulence we could all be starring in nighttime soaps. And the rest of us look like we're in one of those Mel Gibson *Road Warrior* movies. . . . " This perspective

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helped to shape the administration's National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement, which stressed the threat to U.S. security and prosperity from "large-scale environmental degradation."

The Dangers of Environmental Security

This new view of environmental problems was on display in an April 1996 speech at Stanford University by then–Secretary of State Warren Christopher. The speech, portrayed as a bold new foreign policy initiative, proposed efforts to strengthen multilateral environmental treaties, stepped-up attempts to resolve regional resource disputes, and the creation of "environmental hubs" in key embassies. But the main thrust was to highlight international environmental threats to U.S. citizens at home and U.S. interests abroad. Christopher invoked security themes repeatedly, describing a "vast new danger" to U.S. national interests: the flow of dangerous pollutants into the United States, the "staggering pressures on global resources" from third world population growth, and downward spirals linking environmental degradation, violence, and instability throughout the global South and the former Soviet bloc.

This tough-minded rhetoric has been institutionalized in a State Department commitment to produce an annual report on the environment and foreign policy, analogous to its reports on human rights abuses and drug trafficking. As with those other documents, State's first environmental assessment—released on Earth Day 1997—conveniently ignored the domestic roots of this global problem. Environmental degradation is framed instead, in classic national-security terms, as an external threat to American strategic and economic interests. In the briefing accompanying the report's release, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright asserted, "Competition for scarce resources is an ancient form of human conflict. . . . In our day, it can still elevate tensions among countries or cause ruinous violence within them." In the foreword to the report Vice President Gore describes the environment as a key post-cold war strategic interest, critical to American efforts to promote democracy, free trade and "stability" worldwide.

Finding a security threat in social problems certainly gets attention. But as we have seen in America's all-too-literal declarations of war on crime, drugs, and oil shortages, the security frame distorts the true problem, blurs underlying responsibility, and produces coercive policy responses. So too with environmental security: it blames the world's poor, plays to the worst stereotypes of both first and third worlds, and raises the false promise of insulating America from the effects of global environmental problems.

Environmental security centers the crosshairs on the global South. Tellingly, Christopher's speech made not a single reference to the role of the industrialized countries in threatening global ecosystems—targeting instead population pressures and resource consumption in developing countries from China and Mexico to Rwanda and Haiti. Western Europe and Japan were described not as the major global polluters they are, but rather as important partners in U.S.-led initiatives.

The truth, of course, is just the opposite. The specter of all those Chinese refrigerators and automobiles notwithstanding, the North remains responsible for two-thirds to three-fourths of all major pollutants, with the United States the chief culprit. Responsibility is skewed even more when one considers the industrialized world's ecological shadow—the fact that much of the South's resource use is tied to production processes that feed northern consumption. The destruction of tropical forests occurs in the Amazon and Sarawak, but is fueled by a transnationalized world economy centered in New York, Brussels, and Tokyo. To be sure, rainforest destruction is also driven by local factors ranging from resource scarcities or population pressures to the desires of a coercive regime to occupy remote territories and control dissident minorities. But the millions of rural poor flooding the Amazon during the 1980s were largely displaced agricultural workers from the south, forced off the land by the export-driven mechanization of Brazilian agriculture. And the rise of Indonesia's forestry exports fed Japan's voracious appetite for imported tropical hardwoods, through a cozy relationship between Japanese firms and the Indonesian state. Responses to global environmental problems that

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do not begin with a hard look at the workings of the global economy and the demand side of this destructive equation are at best naive and at worst deceptive. By starting with the geographic location of visible symptoms rather than the social location of underlying causes, the security framework draws attention away from the roots of the problem.

ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY also sketches a nightmarish cartoon of the global South as a realm of overpopulation, natural resource depletion, and ecological degradation. Consider Kaplan's stark vision, which apparently so impressed Clinton: "Outside the stretch limo would be a rundown, crowded planet of skinhead Cossacks and *juju* warriors, influenced by the worst refuse of pop culture and ancient tribal hatreds, and battling over scraps of overused earth in guerrilla conflicts that ripple across continents and intersect in no discernible pattern—meaning there's no easy-to-define threat." No matter that this clashes with the upbeat chanting of neoliberalism about "newly industrialized countries" and "big emerging markets." Fears that uncontrollable third world disintegration will spill over to the allegedly sustainable societies of the North resonate deeply, and play to the same nativism that has so powerfully fueled anti-immigration sentiment.

The reality of global production, consumption, and their environmental burdens is far more complex. A global class of marginalized poor does exist, and their actions—a product of desperation, dislocation, and the destruction of traditional communities—do hurt the planet's environmental health. At the other end of the spectrum lies a global class of overexploiters whose systems of production, consumption, and exchange do far greater damage. As environmental writer Alan Durning has pointed out, a few simple indicators distinguish these global extremes: Overexploiters get most of their protein from grain-fed meat, work in office buildings that are air-conditioned even in winter, and transport themselves, typically alone, by automobile. The marginalized, in contrast, face protein deficiencies, suffer in the heat or cold, and walk.

But the polarizing North-South imagery of environmental security conveniently ignores that these are indeed extremes, which don't reflect how most of the planet's people actually live. What of the four billion who coexist with a billion overexploiters and a billion marginalized? This group is far too diverse to be romanticized as a middle class of planetary sustainers. But they do share a higher quality of life than the marginalized poor while imposing a much lower environmental impact than the overexploiters: adequate protein without the ecological excesses of grain-fed beef, personal mobility without the planetary burden of the single-passenger automobile, and, if not the luxury of year-round air conditioning, then perhaps the modest comfort of the sensibly designed dwelling and the electric fan.

The distorted two-class imagery of North and South obscures the planet's single greatest environmental challenge: preventing the destruction of this large but increasingly fragile middle stratum wherever it is found. The wrenching changes of economic globalization are eroding it from both ends, with the upper portion being sucked into the global class of overexploiters and the lower portion joining the ranks of the marginalized. These effects can be seen in the so-called big emerging markets being dragged into the world economy through capital mobility and trade liberalization. They can also be seen in the industrialized countries, where global economic integration, deurbanization, corporate relocation, and the destruction of rural communities have had such disruptive effects. Is Mexico—where Coke is now the most popular drink, even as one-third or more of rural people lack safe drinking water—North or South? What of America, where gas-guzzling sport utility vehicles have become a middle-class fashion statement, even as countless small towns victimized by corporate downsizing and relocation have lost access to interurban bus or rail service? The world's greatest environmental imperative is also its biggest social challenge—preventing or dealing with the impact of these turbulent changes on relatively stable and sustainable local communities.

Beyond the muddled view of the problem lies the dangerous link between security rheto-

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ric and the enduring realities of the national security state. Some advocates see environmental security as a powerful way to move from a national, conflictual politics to global cooperation. But framing environmental problems in security terms is easy; reworking the security frame itself is not. Some environmentalists, for example, would like to tap the rich scientific expertise of the weapons labs and the information-gathering abilities of the intelligence community. But the culture of hierarchy and secrecy pervading these institutions is poorly suited to an open exchange of useful information, and it inhibits practical applications. Security institutions have enormous power to resist change; the idea that threats come from specific enemies runs deep. Again, America's experiences with wars on drugs, crime, and energy shortages are cautionary tales, in which violence and coercion have become central instruments of policy.

Rhetoric matters in part because of what it highlights and conceals. But rhetoric also creates a conceptual frame for policy, and some of the more tangible dangers of environmental security can be seen in the way it is used to bring the defense and intelligence communities into a more central role in U.S. environmental diplomacy. This would be fine, even welcome, if that role were limited to ensuring that the Pentagon would clean up its own mess and share what it learned with military establishments around the world, or that the CIA would make classified data available to civilian environmental researchers. Instead, a 1996 interagency "memorandum of understanding" places the Pentagon, in conjunction with the EPA and the Department of Energy, at the commanding heights of a wide range of international environmental initiatives. The Pentagon's enormous budget for hazardous waste clean-up ensures that it will dominate interagency discussions.

What will this mean in practice? Consider the way Sherri Goodman, deputy undersecretary of defense for environmental security, describes the two "pillars" of environmental security: "adequate indications and warnings of potential crises" and "promoting military environmental cooperation that contributes significantly to democracy, trust and understanding." The priorities are clear: environmental monitoring in the hands of the intelligence community and international environmental dialogue through military channels. As CIA Director John Deutch told the Los Angeles World Affairs Council in 1996: "National reconnaissance systems that track the movement of tanks through the desert, can, at the same time, track the movement of the desert itself. . . . Adding this environmental dimension to traditional political, economic and military analysis enhances our ability to alert policymakers to potential instability, conflict, or human disaster and to identify situations which may draw in American involvement." Deutch also trumpeted the value of environmental intelligence in giving American business the edge against foreign competitors.

The State Department, in contrast, fiddles with bureaucratic reorganization: the creation of environmental "hubs" at a few U.S. embassies has been trumpeted as a way to resolve regional resource disputes, even as U.S. commitments to the Global Environmental Facility fell $100 million in arrears and environmental aid to the former Soviet states fell from $75 million in 1995 to $10 million in 1997. The growing prominence of the defense and intelligence establishments in environmental foreign policy can only undermine State's already dubious notion that the United States can play the role of honest broker in the global South. The rhetoric of security plays to the South's worst suspicions—that the real goal is geopolitical pressure backed up by veiled suggestions of military intervention, all to protect "global" resources from local uses. And at home, security themes reinforce the dangerous notion that the United States can insulate itself from environmental damage through unilateral action, threats, deterrence, and other traditional security practices.

Beyond the Environment-Security Trap

A globally oriented environmentalism must remain a key part of the progressive agenda. The health of the planet and its people are threatened by the same forces creating economic disempowerment, social turbulence, and xenophobic nationalism in American society. Exposing the roots of global environ-

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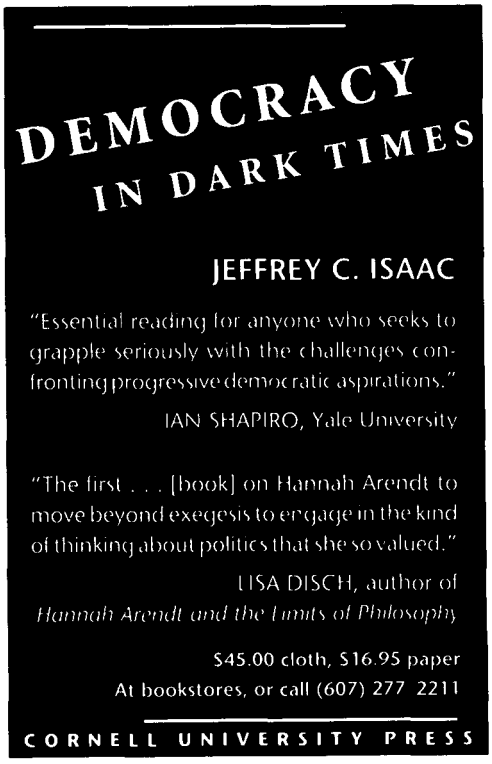
mental degradation also reveals the foundations of power and injustice in the international system. In contrast with the distorted imagery and dangerous rhetoric of environmental security, a progressive agenda for American environmental diplomacy would begin with a very different set of assumptions: that both North and South are a good deal more complex than the cartoonish portraits of sustainable haven and looming threat would have us believe; that polarization of the planet's ecological middle strata into overexploiters and marginalized poor is the world's biggest environmental threat; that the tools and ideologies of national security are more likely to promote coercive policies and undermine international cooperation than to mobilize society for creative solutions; and that the real enemies are a corrosive consumer culture and the loss of social control over the global economy.

From this starting point, a very different diplomatic agenda emerges. Environmental diplomacy must be broadened to include not just state organs and a select few Washington-based nongovernmental organizations, but rather the full range of citizens' groups and grassroots coalitions protesting environmental destruction. "Development" policies that create a class of overexploiters but fail to meet basic human needs must change. And we must stop equating global environmentalism with a few narrow, issue-specific environmental agreements such as the biodiversity accord struck at the 1992 Earth Summit or the ongoing climate-change negotiations. These brokered deals are too easily captured by narrow sectoral interests, and have little prospect for success if they are not linked to a greening of the web of global economic practices in which they are embedded.

Perhaps most important, the rise of environmental security, like the rise of free-market environmentalism before it, shows the need to reinfuse American environmentalism with a progressive agenda. Several of the largest national environmental organizations have drifted rightward in recent years, lacking ties to a broader progressive coalition and seeking to be players in an increasingly conservative Washington. Last fall's fast-track debate showed that the major organizations can still back (or at least not oppose) progressive positions. But in the NAFTA debate, an important part of the environmental community chose to support the political and economic structures that underlie pollution, environmental degradation, and ecological injustice.

So far the major organizations have not embraced the concept or rhetoric of environmental security, and perhaps they will see no tactical advantage in it. But there is a real danger that mainstream American environmentalism—politically adrift and increasingly reluctant to engage underlying structures of power—will converge with a foreign-policy establishment that can see the global South only as failed states or emerging markets. If this happens, Warren Christopher's claim that environmental issues are entering "the mainstream of American foreign policy" will prove all too accurate, to the detriment of the planet and its people. ●

KEN CONCA is assistant professor of government and politics at the University of Maryland and the author of *Manufacturing Insecurity: The Rise and Fall of Brazil's Military-Industrial Complex*.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The Left, the Nation-State, and European Citizenship

David Miller

As the European Union (EU) moves steadily toward fuller political integration in the form of the single European currency, attitudes on the left toward projects of supranational governance remain ambivalent. Currently in Britain, the Labour Party under Tony Blair presents itself as markedly more Euro-friendly than the defeated Conservatives, but historically the two parties have not always aligned themselves in this way. Both parties have been divided between pro- and anti-Europeans, but until the arrival of Margaret Thatcher, enthusiasm for the European project ran higher among the Conservatives. On the Labour left, membership in the European Economic Community (as it was called then) was seen as imposing a straitjacket of economic orthodoxy on the policies of national governments, and although this point of view has become heretical under New Labour, we can expect to see it expressed more often as the debate about whether to join the single currency heats up. Equally, pressures from big business will in due course force the Conservative Party to moderate its present Euro-skeptic stance.

The same confused picture, with parties swapping positions over time, can be found in other EU member-states. Can we say any more here? Should parties of the left be more enthusiastic, or less enthusiastic, than parties of the right for transnational groupings like the EU as a matter of general principle, or is it simply a matter of assessing each proposal as it comes along? How should we think about this question?

If we look to the socialist tradition for inspiration, we find that it contains strong currents both of nationalism and internationalism. The internationalist strain stems philosophically from the Marxist belief (like most Marxist beliefs not held in its crude form by Marx himself) that national divisions are created artificially by the capitalist class to divide the proletariat, and politically from the belief that socialism in one country could never be a feasible possibility. The nationalist strain derives first from the fact that all socialist projects, whether communist or social democratic, have been national projects, in the sense that they have been undertaken by parties and movements working within national borders; second from the fact that in order to carry these projects through, socialists have needed to invoke the idea of the nation. This can be seen only too clearly if we consider the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, where appeals to national solidarity and pride always played a central role in socialist propaganda, but even mild social democrats such as Bill Clinton and Tony Blair pepper their speeches with references to "our nation" or "this great country of ours" as a way of inducing the audience to consider some small sacrifice of personal gain for the good of the whole.

Faced with this apparent conflict between socialist internationalism and the practical significance of national loyalties, many on the left have responded by saying that the socialist invocation of nationhood is simply a matter of political realism. Given that most of the people to whom they want to appeal, especially most members of the working class, have fairly strong nationalist sentiments, it makes sense to use those feelings constructively in building a socialist movement—or at least not to trample upon them overtly. George Bernard Shaw once said that if you wanted to rebel against high-heeled shoes, you should take care to do it in a very smart hat. But that is the beginning and the end of the matter. To

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the extent that the public can be weaned away from its national prejudices toward a more cosmopolitan outlook, it should be. There are no reasons of principle to embrace the nation-state as a unit of political mobilization.

This common response seems to me badly mistaken. To see why, we need to think about the values underlying the political projects of the left. These are of course disputed, but among them we must surely count *democracy* and *social justice*. We want to live in societies in which there is a far greater degree of popular control over policy making, in which people are not simply asked to vote for representatives every four or five years, but have more direct input into the way those societies develop. And we also want to live in societies in which the huge resource inequalities generated by capitalist markets are combated by public action, whether this takes the form of redistribution through social security and the welfare state or more radically through new forms of economic organization (employee-ownership schemes, for instance) that alter the primary distribution of income in the direction of greater equality.

For present purposes there is no need to be more specific than this about the goals of the left. What interests me is the way in which these aims are linked to something like the nation-state in its familiar form. Take democracy first. If political decisions are going to be made in a genuinely democratic way—through public discussion in which all sections of society have their voice heard—one crucial requirement is a sufficient degree of trust among the debating constituency. For democratic decision making to work successfully, each participating group must be willing to listen to opposing points of view and be willing to moderate its own demands in order to reach a compromise that everyone can accept. Equally, when a decision has been reached, those who find themselves in a minority—we cannot expect decisions to be unanimous—must be willing to comply with the outcome, knowing that their point of view has at least been taken seriously, and that on future occasions they may find themselves on the winning side. All this requires confidence in, and understanding of, those one disagrees with politically. Trust of this kind is much more likely to exist among people who share a common national identity, speak a common language, and have overlapping cultural values. Conversely, in multinational states, where trust exists much more within the national groups than among them, politics tends to take the form of bargaining, and each decision is regarded as a victory or a defeat for the group that one belongs to. As Michael Lind has argued ("In Defense of Liberal Nationalism," *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 1994), prospects for democracy of any kind are fragile in these circumstances, and the more radical form of democracy is clearly a non-starter.

NEXT, WHAT about social justice? Every system of social justice requires people to limit to some degree their pursuit of private advantage through the market system. This is not simply a matter of taxing or expropriating the very rich. Ordinary working people must be taxed, or pay into social-insurance schemes, to provide social services and income support for the unemployed. Everyone must comply with fair, nondiscriminatory rules for job appointments and promotions. What can motivate people to make the sacrifices that social justice requires, whether this takes the form of supporting parties that promise redistribution, or simply behaving in a fair way in their everyday lives? There is a wealth of evidence that shows that people are more willing to make such sacrifices the more closely they feel themselves tied to the likely beneficiaries of their actions. (Psychological studies of justice, for instance, show that people are more likely to afford equal treatment to others with whom they share a common identity or common values.)

From this point of view, nationhood is a very important source of common identity, particularly in societies that are sharply divided along lines of race, ethnicity, religion, or lifestyle. I may not approve of, or sympathize with, the personal beliefs and values of the people in the next house or the next street, but because I see them as my compatriots, I feel a sense of responsibility toward them, and also a degree of confidence that if they are now benefiting from my contribution (as a taxpayer, say) they would be prepared to return the ben-

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efit if the roles were reversed and it was I who needed income support or medical care. As Richard Rorty has argued, programs to help disadvantaged minorities in the inner cities sound much more persuasive when presented as programs to help "our fellow Americans" rather than simply "our fellow human beings." To say this does not mean that we should be indifferent to the fate of human beings worldwide, but it does recognize that aspirations to social justice are linked to distinct communities whose members feel a special responsibility to one another.

So if the left continues to value democracy and social justice, as it surely must, it must also acknowledge that the pursuit of these goals presupposes national communities in which mutual trust stems from a shared identity. At the same time, it is important not to present these identities as though they were God given and eternal. Many studies have shown how the national divisions that now exist were generated historically, sometimes from above by political leaders anxious to consolidate newly formed states, sometimes from below by minority ethnic groups seeking to escape from the clutches of governments controlled by the majority. So this raises the possibility that nations in their present form might be superseded by larger units—in the European context, the possibility that Europe itself might come to serve as a source of identity and citizenship that overrides existing national allegiances. This certainly is the hope of some European leaders today. But is it a realistic hope, and should the left be supporting moves in this direction?

LET'S BEGIN with the current situation. It's fairly clear that for people across Europe the nation remains their primary focus of political identity and allegiance. If asked who they are willing to fight to defend, or who they are willing to support by paying taxes, the answer given by people in each country is their fellow nationals. Attitudes to the general idea of European unity are broadly positive—though views about the European Union as an institution are more divided, with majorities in some countries saying that on balance they would be better out than in. But Europe does not command loyalty in the ways that nation-states do. A united Europe is seen as a useful arrangement that provides benefits like freer travel and greater access to jobs and markets, but it does not generate a sense of emotional identification.

Even if Europe cannot yet provide the sense of identity that nations can, does it not at least provide a transnational form of citizenship that might be a model for other parts of the world? Certainly European citizenship exists in a legal sense. But what does this mean in practice? European citizens enjoy some rights that are not available to outsiders, for example, the rights to travel freely across borders within Europe, and to work and study in other European countries. They also have the right to challenge national legislation or policy by bringing a case before the European Court of Justice. This latter right has had some significance in forcing national governments to come into line with European practice in some areas. But its reach should not be exaggerated. The European Court has been careful to construe its remit quite narrowly so as not to challenge the right of member states to pursue different policies in areas such as health, education, and industrial relations according to national traditions and preferences.

If we look at European citizenship in the light of T.H. Marshall's classic account of citizenship as a common status uniting civil, political, and social rights, we find that to date at least only rights of the first kind are included. In a technical sense it could be argued that European citizens enjoy political rights in the form of rights to elect MPs to the European Parliament. However, knowledge of and interest in the doings of this parliament remain minimal among ordinary voters, and European elections are fought very largely by national parties on national issues. Politically speaking, people continue overwhelmingly to think and act as members of national electorates. As for social citizenship, rights to health, education, social security, pensions, and so forth remain under the control of national governments, subject only to such common standards as are imposed by the European treaties and enforced by the Court of Justice. However, this

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still leaves room for considerable variation in how these rights are defined. It would be hard to claim that European social citizenship exists in any concrete sense.

If this is a correct assessment of the current situation, what are the prospects of the European Union changing in such a way that it can accommodate the ideas of democracy and social justice that I sketched earlier? Could we see, for instance, the development of a Europe-wide practice of democratic citizenship? One serious obstacle to this, as Tony Judt has emphasized in his book *A Grand Illusion*, is the continuing existence of language divisions among the peoples of Europe. Although negotiations among political elites are increasingly carried out using English as a common language (French resistance to this practice seems finally to be crumbling), if we are looking toward a form of democratic politics in which the public at large is involved in political debate, we must recognize that such debate will necessarily be carried on in the vernacular language of each community. We cannot expect the ordinary citizens of Italy, Denmark, or Greece to conduct their political discussions using English, or any other second language for that matter. So these debates will remain opaque to those who speak a different language, and instead of a European public opinion, which might form the basis of a Europe-wide form of democracy, the best we can hope for are separate bodies of public opinion that could then be fed into elite negotiations at the European level. There seems to be a simple trade-off here: the wider the scope of citizenship is drawn, and the more publics it therefore has to embrace, the weaker its democratic credentials become.

We need to ask similar questions about social justice on a European scale. At present some redistribution does take place between richer and poorer European states, but this is a result of regional and other policies negotiated between elites in Brussels, and most people remain unaware of the transfers unless they happen to be the direct beneficiaries. The evidence suggests that people's sense of their responsibilities does not extend to having their tax revenues used to support poorer citizens in other nation-states. So there is a gap between citizens' sense of social justice and what is actually happening on the ground, a gap that, if my earlier argument is correct, will not be bridged unless a common sense of European identity emerges that transcends national borders.

THIS PROBLEM is likely to get far worse if and when the European Union is enlarged to include those central and east European states that are currently in the process of applying for membership. To bring the economies and welfare regimes of these states up to the point where they can properly be integrated into the European economy (with free movement of labor and so forth) would require redistribution of resources on a scale well beyond that so far attempted. It is hard to see why the relatively prosperous citizens of Britain or France would be willing to supply the means to raise Poles or Hungarians to a position of near equality in the absence of a strong sense of mutual identification. (It has often been pointed out that the economic costs to the former West Germany of German reunification were only tolerable because of the powerful feelings of pan-German national identity that came to the fore in those dramatic moments when the Berlin Wall came tumbling down.) Once again there appears to be a trade-off. Europe can choose to expand, and there may be good political arguments for bringing the states of eastern Europe into the Union, but only at the cost of a loosening of the economic bonds that have developed among the members of the existing core.

None of this should be taken as a root-and-branch argument against transnational federations or other forms of transnational governance. Linking states together by such institutions serves important values, most obviously the peaceful resolution of international conflicts. But our question is whether the distinctive values of the left are promoted when political decisions are removed from the competence of existing nation-states and transferred to larger units, and my argument has been that the causes of democracy and social justice are unlikely to be advanced. The left should welcome the forging of friendly bonds between erstwhile adversaries such as has occurred

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within the European Union, but it should not move too quickly to dismantle or marginalize the nation-state. It is not accidental that left causes have been advanced furthest in communities that have combined a strong sense of national solidarity with effective political institutions: the Scandinavian social democracies are the clearest example.

Many would argue that the nation-state, whatever virtues it might have had until recently, is rapidly becoming obsolescent. The changing structure of the global economy means that only larger political units have any chance of controlling market outcomes. The Scandinavian example cuts both ways: with some reluctance, both Denmark and Sweden felt impelled to join the European Community, despite its defects in terms of inequality and high levels of unemployment, feeling that their economies were too exposed to the forces of international trade and investment if they stayed outside. Only the Norwegians have remained determinedly autonomous. This is a large issue, and all I can do is signal my agreement with those who argue that states still have more freedom in their economic and social policies than strong globalization theses would suggest. The state cannot challenge international capital and currency markets head on—or at least it will pay a very heavy price if it tries to do so—but there are many areas of policy in which a strong commitment to social justice can go hand in hand with creating conditions that will attract foreign investment and help the economy to remain competitive. Providing, at public expense, the education and training needed to create a skilled and flexible workforce is one obvious example.

Unquestionably there are some problems—global environmental problems, for instance—that cannot be solved by nation-states acting independently of one another. The fact that groups such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth have been able to unite activists across borders has led some commentators to argue that we are witnessing the emergence of new forms of citizenship that are not tied to any geographical location, not even such a broad location as Europe. But should we be describing politics in this vein as citizen politics at all?

In what sense is the Greenpeace activist a citizen? There is no determinate community with which she identifies politically, and no one, except perhaps other members of her group, with whom she stands in relations of reciprocity. So there is no group of fellow citizens with whom she is committed to seeking grounds of agreement. If confronted by individuals who do not share her commitment to the cause, she must either convert them or oppose them by whatever means she has at her disposal. To say this is, let us be clear, not to condemn her. If the cause is a good one, and she pursues it in a way that respects the rights of others (nonviolently, for instance), she may act heroically and well—many of us, I am sure, will feel this about the Greenpeace campaigns on nuclear testing and whaling. But this is not citizenship in any recognizable sense. It does not involve democratic debate with others with different interests and views. It may supplement, but it cannot replace, the form of citizenship that has emerged in national communities whose members seek to practice justice among themselves.

The distinctive aims of the left must, I believe, be promoted by strengthening citizenship and fighting for social justice primarily at the national level, through movements and parties organized at that level. Collaboration with like-minded movements abroad is of course fine, and so is participation in transnational and international institutions, but we should avoid the error of thinking that membership in these bodies can somehow achieve socialist or social democratic aims that fail to win democratic support at home. Europe has sometimes looked like that to Labour supporters in Britain, particularly during the Thatcher years: if only we were fully paid-up members of the European club, somehow that would safeguard cherished social democratic programs against the ravages of domestic politics. But that is an illusion, and Tony Blair, if he did succumb to it, will soon be disabused. ●

David Miller teaches political theory at Nuffield College, Oxford. He is the author of *On Nationality* and is working on a new book on social justice.

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Dark Truth in Saddam's Iraq

Kanan Makiya is one of Iraq's leading intellectuals in exile. Under the pseudonym of Samir al-Khalil he published *Republic of Fear* in 1989. It quickly became essential reading for anyone seeking to understand Saddam Hussein's dictatorship. A new edition is about to appear, and this essay is an abridged version of its new introduction, which tells the story of Iraq's tragedy from the Gulf War to today. —Eds.

Kanan Makiya

On August 18, 1994 President Saddam Hussein promulgated Law 109. It read: "According to Section 1, Article 42, of the Iraqi Constitution, the Revolutionary Command Council has decreed that . . . the foreheads of those individuals who repeat the crime for which their hand was cut off will be branded with a mark in the shape of an X. Each intersecting line will be one centimeter in length and one millimeter in width." The crimes "for which their hand was cut off" were theft and desertion. Branding with a red-hot iron was being introduced in Saddam Hussein's post–Gulf War Iraq as a new form of punishment for these crimes.

Soldiers and car thieves were singled out for prosecution on the basis of Iraq's new punishment laws. Iraqi newspapers reported that thirty-six thousand cars had been stolen in 1993, many of them in broad daylight on the main streets of Baghdad. This, in a police state that took pride in the fact that the crime rate under its regime, especially since the middle 1970s, had plummeted.

The new law was formulated in general terms: stealing anything worth more than five thousand dinars—worth twelve dollars in 1994—by anyone who was not a minor had become punishable by amputation in the first instance and in the second by branding. Something must have gone wrong in the case of thirty-seven-year-old Ali Abed Ali, because he had his hand amputated and his forehead branded with an X at the same time. His crime: stealing a television set and two hundred and fifty Iraqi dinars (worth about fifty cents at the time). Ali was shown on Iraqi television on September 9, 1994, in the hospital, still under anesthetic, with his bandaged arm and close-ups of his branded forehead.

According to military personnel who escaped to Kuwait in 1994, up to two thousand soldiers already might have been branded on the forehead. A Kurdish opposition radio station based in northern Iraq declared that eight hundred soldiers with branded foreheads were captured by Kurdish forces along the border of the safe-haven zone in northern Iraq. Whether or not these figures are accurate, the punishments were clearly no marginal affair.

Only after being caught for desertion a third time would a soldier be executed. This was an improvement on the situation before the passage of these new laws, when the instant and unquestioned penalty for desertion was a firing squad. The reaction of ordinary Iraqis to the new laws was unprecedented. Two men whose ears had been cut off immolated themselves in central Baghdad in October 1994. Following the murder of a doctor in the southern city of Nasiriyya by an amputee, and the storming of the headquarters of the Ba'th Party in the city of Amara by a crowd that cut off the ears of Ba'thi officials, several hundred doctors went on strike to protest having to carry out the new punishments. Upon being threatened with having their own ears cut off, the doctors called off their strike.

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Changing Forms of Cruelty

Since I finished writing *Republic of Fear* in 1986, the chamber of horrors that is Saddam Hussein's Iraq has grown into something that not even the most morbid imagination could have dreamed up. *Republic of Fear* is about how such horror stories became the norm inside a hitherto ordinary developing country. It describes how a new, Kafkaesque world came into being, one ruled and held together by fear. In this world, the ideal citizen became an informer. Fear was not incidental or episodic, as in more "normal" states; it had become constitutive of the Iraqi body politic. The Ba'th developed the politics of fear into an art form, one that ultimately served the purpose of legitimizing its rule by making large numbers of people complicit in the violence of the regime. In most cases they had no choice in the matter. Still, their actions had to be justified, and ended up legitimating a regime whose emergence could not be blamed on any outsider. The Iraqi Ba'th is a wholly indigenous phenomenon, and the longevity of its rule can be understood only against this background of public acquiescence or acceptance of its authority.

On the eve of the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War, in September 1980, Saddam Hussein presided over a regime that had changed all the parameters affecting societal and state-organized violence in the country. Expansion of the means of violence—army, police, security apparatuses, networks of informers, party militia, party and state bureaucracies—had undergone the classic inversion: from being a means to an end, the elimination of opponents and the exercise of raw power became horrific ends in themselves. Writing about the Iran-Iraq War, I said, "War, any war, it does not matter against whom, is a not unlikely outcome of the unbridled growth of the means of violence, particularly when it is so structured as to compromise literally masses of people in its terror."

Nothing that came out of the Iran-Iraq War, that eight-year-long meat grinder, was going to be the same as what went into it. The war had ended on terms favorable to Iraq. But did the violence stop, or even abate? On the contrary: it turned in on itself as it had done before, from 1968 to 1980, the year the war started. The day after the cease-fire went into effect, Iraqi warplanes dropped chemical bombs on Kurdish villages. Several thousand helpless civilians died between August 25 and 27, 1988, victims of a genocidal official campaign of extermination of Kurds that had begun in earnest in February 1988, long after the regime had become assured that it was well on its way to winning the war.

Since 1990, human-rights organizations have taken major strides in documenting the abuses of the Iraqi Ba'th, which were described by Max van der Stoel, special rapporteur for the United Nations on Iraq, as being "of an exceptionally grave character—so grave that it has few parallels in the years that have passed since the Second World War." The world of the Iraqi Ba'th was Kafkaesque in 1980, but by 1997 it had become even stranger.

THERE IS nothing irrational about this strangeness. Cruelty feeds on itself. It has shape and form, follows patterns, obeys its own rules, and has its own history. How it progresses in a polity, or why those subjected to officially sanctioned cruelty react differently at different points in their lives, is very revealing of the most fundamental questions in politics. The politics of bodily disfigurement, for instance, came out of a Ba'thist tradition that was established long before Saddam Hussein introduced his 1994 punishment laws.

The Baghdad show trials of 1969 affirmed the power of the fledgling Ba'thist state by a stage-managed, intentionally excessive display of cruelty that dramatized the imbalance between victim and victimizer. This came at a time when the state was still weak. After those early experiences, all through the eight grueling years of war with Iran, few Iraqis dreamed of publicly protesting the harsh punishments to which they were routinely subjected. For nearly twenty years every Iraqi knew that he or she lived in a torturing state, but the omnipotence of the state's repressive capability lay in the fact that all opposition to it had been crushed. Everything was secret where punishment was concerned, from the arrest to the charges, the interrogation, the extraction of the evidence, the trial, the judgment, and the ex-

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ecution of the sentence.

All this began to change after the Gulf War of 1991. Iraqis began to speak out and tell their stories like never before. Taking advantage of the regime's rout in that war, they even revolted, capturing two-thirds of the country's governorates, and holding entire cities for a period of one to three weeks. A window of opportunity opened up for the whole region with this dramatic transformation of priorities. But not for long. For the insurgents stood alone, rejected by their fellow Arabs and by the Western leaders of the coalition that had expelled Iraq from Kuwait. They were crushed, and in the years that followed that wild, insurrectionary moment, the system went back to a formula that had worked so well for it in its early days: public displays of extreme cruelty.

The difference this time around was that the absolutism of the Republic of Fear was breaking down. Rank-and-file soldiers were deserting and telling their stories as they had not done before. However, urbane, educated middle-class citizens were also learning what it meant to be hungry for the first time in their lives. Desperation ruled the south, which had spearheaded the March 1991 uprising. Law and order were collapsing in Baghdad. Under such conditions it was not possible to shoot and torture everybody.

Nothing in Iraq today is as it was in the heyday of the regime's absolutism. The war, the uprising that followed on its heels, and seven terrible years of sanctions and economic privation have seen to that. Yet Saddam Hussein is still in power—a tin-pot dictator in comparison with Stalin or Hitler, but still one who built a formidable modern system that ruled through fear. And he has outlasted a formidable array of enemies who have long since died or been voted out of office (Ayatollah Khomeini, George Bush, Margaret Thatcher).

Dealing with Saddam Hussein

The promulgation of the horrific new punishment laws in August of 1994 had nothing to do with President Clinton's dispatching U.S. aircraft, ships, and troops to the Gulf in October of that year. Whether they should have had is a different question. However, they did have something to do with why the Iraqi leader was yet again engaged in a game of chicken with the American president and the international community.

The Iraqi economy had been in deep crisis for four years, with a plummeting currency, cuts in government subsidies for basic food items like rice, wheat, and sugar, and skyrocketing prices. In a 1992 attempt to control market forces, Saddam Hussein detained five hundred and fifty of Baghdad's leading merchants on charges of profiteering; forty-two of them were executed, their bodies tied to telephone poles in front of their shops with signs around their necks that read "Greedy Merchant." In short, the Iraqi president was killing, maiming, and branding his citizens as he continued to pick fights with history's most reluctant superpower. With each inconclusive new confrontation, the currency continued its downward spiral, and sanctions bit deeper into the social and moral fabric of the country. But Saddam Hussein stayed on in power, each time regaining a little bit more of his pre–Gulf War aura of invincibility vis-à-vis Iraqis.

The accumulation of little victories turned into a large strategic victory for Saddam Hussein on Friday, August 30, 1996, the day he sent his tanks and forty thousand crack Republican Guard troops into Arbil, inside the safe-haven area set up by the allied coalition in 1991. The secret police followed in their wake, penetrating deep into Iraqi Kurdistan, killing hundreds and arresting thousands of oppositionists who had believed in American promises of protection. Files and publications were captured, and television and radio installations, which the United States had helped to finance, were blown up. Thus ended a five-year experiment in autonomy and self-rule for the Kurdish 20 percent of Iraq's population.

The whole array of arrangements by which the United States had sought to "contain" Saddam Hussein since the Gulf War came tumbling down that summer. Neither Saudi Arabia nor Turkey, trusted allies of the United States and pillars of the Gulf War coalition, was prepared to let American planes use its territory as a launching pad to deliver the Iraqi dictator yet another pinprick response. American policy toward Iraq, summed up in two words, "sanctions" and "containment," was left

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in shambles. But those Iraqis who had sought to change the regime in Baghdad with Western assistance paid the highest price of all. Hundreds were killed; thousands were arrested or driven into exile; and the whole infrastructure of the opposition in northern Iraq was destroyed.

The Iraqi case has a lot to teach us about what happens to an outlaw state that is not overthrown when it consistently breaches international norms but is subjected to a combined regime of sanctions and unbridled tyranny: it corrodes and rots, devastating and impoverishing the vast majority of the population, without becoming any easier to revolt against or overthrow from the inside. Sanctions do not work the way Western policy makers claim they do. Those of us who saw them as an interim measure, pending the overthrow of the regime by an opposition that looked to the West for assistance, have now got to reassess the situation.

"This used to be a rich country," an Iraqi intellectual who describes himself as having been a fervent Saddam admirer confided to Youssef Ibrahim of the *New York Times*. "Today I'd say not more than one million Iraqis are living in any real sense of the word. They are those who uphold Saddam's rule and those who protect him. They are given food and plenty of money. The rest of us are drifting into this surreal kind of poverty where university professors sell their family's possessions to eat. It is breaking down the very fabric of this society."

In the spring of 1994, even Saddam had begun to show signs of the strain involved in constantly trying to outwit American presidents. The strain could be seen on television during a March 13 speech on the occasion of the Muslim feast Eid al-Fitr. The president was uncharacteristically angry, slapping his thigh while fulminating against the West for the most recent renewal of the UN sanctions. His government had just offered a ten-thousand-dollar reward to anybody who killed a United Nations relief worker in northern Iraq. Three divisions of the elite Republican Guards had been moved northward to threaten Iraqi Kurdistan in March (just as they were to threaten Kuwait in October of the same year). The Iraqi leader allowed himself to look exhausted before his whole country (something leaders of his ilk must never do).

History is littered with leaders who crumbled at moments such as these. Saddam Hussein may be made of sterner stuff, but there is nothing inexplicable about his longevity in office, given the importance that a bungling United States has itself chosen to lend him. In the 1980s, he was a defender of the "eastern flank of the Arab world," to cite the title of a book very influential in Washington circles in the late 1980s. In 1990–1991, he was worth sending 450,000 Americans halfway across the world to fight against. All the important issues since then go back to that war's unfinished business, and a veritable American obsession with containing the adversary, as opposed to getting on with the obvious business of helping Iraqis to topple him. This clumsy, unprincipled, hands-on/hands-off policy of a musclebound superpower saved Saddam Hussein in 1994, just as it had saved him from the retribution of ordinary Iraqis at the end of the 1991 war.

THAT TRANSFORMING moment in Iraqi politics began the moment a formal cease-fire came into effect, on February 28, 1991. A column of Iraqi tanks fleeing from Kuwait happened to roll into downtown Basra, Iraq's southernmost city. The commander positioned his vehicle in front of a gigantic mural of Saddam in military uniform located next to this Ba'th Party headquarters. Standing atop his vehicle and addressing the portrait, he denounced the dictator in a blistering speech: "What has befallen us of defeat, shame, and humiliation, Saddam, is the result of your follies, your miscalculations, and your irresponsible actions!" A crowd assembled. The commander jumped back into his tank and swiveled the gun turret to take aim at the portrait. Saddam lost his face, literally, in a classic revolutionary moment, one that sparked the post–Gulf War Iraqi intifada. Within hours there was a meltdown of authority in Iraq.

Losing face and the breakdown of authority have a very long history in this part of the world. The next time Saddam Hussein tweaks an American nose, the U.S. president would be well advised, before deciding how to re-

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spond, to ponder the implications of the fact that Saddam Hussein is more afraid of losing face before his enemies (above all his own citizens, who are his greatest enemies) than he is of the entire military arsenal of the United States.

Not only did American policy makers not understand this; they seem even to have been terrified by what Iraqis did at the end of the civil war. The national security adviser under George Bush, Brent Scowcroft, told ABC's Peter Jennings what he thought of the insurgency that was calling upon the allied armies to help Iraqis overthrow the tyrant and finish the job that the war had started: "I frankly wish it hadn't happened—because the military were faced with the problem of maybe a revolution inside Iraq. And they put the revolution down rather than turning the wrath against Saddam Hussein."

The conversation continued:

> *Jennings*: Do I state it correctly when you say that having seen the rebellion [in southern and northern Iraq] develop, you would have preferred a coup?
> *Scowcroft*: Oh, yes. Yes, we clearly would have preferred a coup. There's no question of that.
> *Jennings*: Did you genuinely believe at this period that somewhere in the labyrinth around . . .
> *Scowcroft*: Yes. Yes. Yes.

As it happens, *Republic of Fear* was to a large extent about how the Ba'th under Saddam Hussein had been organizing its regime since 1968 to become "coup-proof." The levels of cruelty attained actually required that the army be subordinated to the secret police in a way that had no precedent in the modern history of Iraq. Scowcroft's answers underline how little the United States understood about the country it had mobilized nearly half a million men to fight in 1990–1991.

NEITHER THE military pyrotechnics of Desert Storm nor the pinprick Tomahawk missile attacks of the various Iraqi-American confrontations since the Gulf War can cover up for the failure of the American political imagination when it comes to what ought to have been done about Saddam Hussein: remove him from office, or, at the very least, relentlessly expose his criminality before his own public and in the eyes of the world. That would have entailed shifting attention to the plight of the people of Iraq.

To its everlasting credit, Western public opinion, driven by the Western media, pointed the way forward. It did so in reaction to images of Kurds fleeing Saddam's vengeance and dying at the rate of a thousand a day on the mountain slopes of Iraqi Kurdistan in April 1991. A deeply reluctant Bush administration was forced to support a historic statement, UN Resolution 688. The resolution condemned "the repression of the Iraqi civilian population in many parts of Iraq," and demanded that Iraq allow immediate access for relief purposes. This was the first time that the Kurds had been mentioned by name in a UN resolution, and it was also the first time that the United Nations had asserted a right of interference in the internal affairs of a member state. A safe haven was established in mid-April 1991, policed by coalition forces.

Honor and Shame

The justification used by the Iraqi president for his new 1994 punishment laws is that the *Sharia*, Islamic law, was being introduced in Iraq. According to the *Sharia*, punishment for theft is classified with four other punishments, known collectively as the *hudud*, the justification for which is *haqq Allah*, "the right of God." The other offenses are illicit sexual relations, slanderous allegations of unlawful sexual intercourse, wine drinking, and apostasy. Amputation of the hand or foot, or both, is a prescribed punishment for theft under strictly defined conditions (which rarely apply)—but not for desertion. And there are no precedents, Islamic or otherwise, for chopping off people's ears and branding their foreheads.

Branding was a punishment of first resort in England during the Restoration, along with the stocks and whipping. It gave way to imprisonment by an act of Parliament in 1779 that simultaneously abolished the practice and authorized the construction of penitentiary houses. In post–Gulf War Iraq, on the other hand, amputation was on its way to becoming the new punishment of first resort. Branding was an inspired afterthought, following the

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same trajectory as its precursor.

In search of some historical insight into the mind that came up with the new punishment laws, I consulted the seven-volume *Mawsou'at al-'Adhab*, the encyclopedia of torture in the Arab-Muslim world, written by a great Iraqi spirit, 'Abood al-Shalchi. A scholar of the medieval Muslim world, al-Shalchi had argued against capital punishment after his experiences as a trial lawyer and a prosecutor in the 1930s in Iraq. Half a century later, working in exile in civil-war Beirut, al-Shalchi spent his retirement years recording in meticulous detail everything he could unearth from the classic works of Islamic civilization and history on the enormous variety of ways in which the bodies of men and women have been subjected to pain by those in authority. His work is, in effect, the voice of physical pain in the Islamic Middle East. It is indispensable to our comprehending, and coming to terms with, a side of our history whose existence we do not often want to acknowledge. The book is a compilation of retold stories classified under such headings as dragging, trampling to death, pulling by the ear, hanging by one limb, hanging by two limbs, hanging by the breasts, castration, burying alive, denying sleep, sawing to death, and so on.

Yet nowhere in al-Shalchi's encyclopedia could I find clues to shed light on what Saddam Hussein came up with in 1994. Shortly before al-Shalchi's death in 1996, I asked him whether he could think of any historical precedent for the punishment laws that Saddam was promulgating. He came up with the story of the tenth-century Arabic writer al-Khawarazmi, who appears to have been suspected of disloyalty and was permanently scarred on the face by a ruler. From that day until his death, Khawarazmi would not venture out in public without wrapping a turban twice around his head to conceal his disfigurement.

HEREIN LIES an entry point into the anthropology of Saddam Hussein's imagination. Every form of punishment presupposes an idea of human nature and of how it can be manipulated to compel obedience. With Saddam Hussein's new forms of punishment, the victim no longer looks like other people, nor is he expected to be rehabilitated by his punishment. The point is to dishonor him by literally branding him as a thief or coward, making him feel shame rather than guilt.

Guilt is a judgment we place upon ourselves because of a perceived moral failure on our own part—something no Iraqi victims of the new punishment laws are likely to feel, since the regime inflicting the punishment has become illegitimate in their eyes. Honor, on the other hand, goes to the heart of a much more ancient sense of personal and social identity. Branding is a violation of that honor, irrespective of anything the victim may or may not have done. It works because so much of what we hold dear about ourselves arises from the expectation we have of what other people are going to think of us. And that expectation has everything to do with "loss of face," or how we look.

The clans of Takrit, to which Saddam Hussein belongs, had a reputation under the Ottomans for the way they would "break the eye" of any governor they did not like. The governor, along with his wife and children, would be invited for a welcoming feast in the house of a local notable. On the way back, the party would be ambushed by a group of armed masked men. The governor would then be humiliated, often through violation of his womenfolk, after which the men would whip off their masks, showing their faces, and disappear into the night, killing no one. Such a governor could never again preside over the affairs of Takrit.

Most Baghdadis are able to tell the story of how aristocratic Baghdadi families associated with the ancient regime of the monarchy had their "eyes broken" by Saddam Hussein's son and his entourage. Young women from such families were kidnapped off the streets. They would disappear for a few weeks, and then reappear. Everybody would assume that they had been sexually assaulted in some way, but no one would say anything about it, including the victims themselves. The shame that would attach to the families of these women (as much as to the women themselves) was linked to the public's assumption that it knew what had happened. This knowledge was perceived as a greater outrage than the violations perpetrated on the women themselves.

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Amputation and branding extended this same logic to males, with the difference that post–Gulf War offenses like desertion and stealing represented a new and genuine threat to the regime's stability, something certainly not true of women abducted off the streets of Baghdad.

Victimhood and the Future in Iraq

In conditions like those that prevail in a Middle East torn apart by civil wars, revolutions, intifadas, individual and state terrorist actions, and nationalist totalitarianism, the temptation is great to identify with victims of gross abuse. One needs some kind of moral reassurance, some handle on the hellishness of the world, in circumstances where God and religion are undeniably absent (at least for me). The alternative to identifying with the victim is a descent into the nausea of misanthropy and self-hatred, about whose destructive possibilities this century has taught us everything we need to know. The danger in such identification is that it can lead to a diminution in one's critical faculties, one's feel for the reality of the world.

I made this point in my book *Cruelty and Silence* in relation to those fellow Arab and "pro-Arab" intellectuals who so idealized Palestinian victimhood that they became blinded to the nature of the regime in Iraq. Hence the positions they took during the Gulf crisis, which ended up serving the interests of the Iraqi dictator at a historic turning point in the region's fortunes. The book caused hurt feelings, threatened positions in the academic pecking order, and shattered friendships that went back decades. Looking back on the debris of it all, what I am now trying to say is that the all-too-human mistake we might have fallen into—each in our different ways—was that of allowing ourselves to believe that there is something morally redeeming in the quality of victimhood itself.

There isn't. The very opposite is likely to be the case: the victims of cruelty or injustice are not only no better than their tormentors; they are more often than not just waiting to change places with them. That has been the experience of Israelis, particularly since they became an occupying power in 1967, and it has been the experience of Palestinians and Kurds under self-rule in recent years. Human-rights abuses are growing steadily under the new National Authority in Gaza (including "official" murders of Palestinians thought to be "dishonoring" their Palestinianhood by selling land to Jews), and they have grown in northern Iraq ever since the outbreak of fighting between Kurdish factions in May 1994.

Writers like myself, or those whom I criticized, turn to victimhood as a way out of our own helplessness before what Judith Shklar called "the density of evil." But victimhood is not a quality; it is a condition. Invariably it is a condition that diminishes both the victims and us, who have not been hurt, but who write, and who make mistakes when we are consumed with outrage or shame. The danger is that one tends to forget, in such a charged emotional climate, that in a region like the Middle East, victimhood is a condition that may very well have touched everybody, including the victimizers.

CERTAINLY that is the case in Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Already, before the 1991 Gulf War, the absolutism of the regime had brought about the wholesale retreat of Iraqis from all things public into the suffocating embrace of smaller and smaller units of identity: tribe, religious sect, allegiance, and finally individual self-interest. In this world, whose main features had been set in place from about the middle 1970s, Saddam Hussein stood out precisely because, however vicious, he was not primarily a narrowly sectarian leader. He saw himself as the leader of all Iraqis, and proceeded by inventing and reinventing his enemies from the entire mass of human material that was at his disposal—including members of his own family, among whom he conducted purges and killings. Periodically he has found it necessary to reshuffle the deck and start all over again. In so doing he inculcates in both victim and victimizer the very values that he lives and rules by. For a quarter of a century, the polity has been built on distrust, suspicion, conspiratorialism, and betrayal, values which in turn have infected everyone. Every Iraqi today, whether in the opposition or outside it, carries the marks of that victimhood deep inside.

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So severe has the assault on civil society been under the regime that around four hundred Iraqi writers, professionals, artists, and businessmen in exile were driven to put their names to a document that opens with this admission:

> Civil society in Iraq has been continuously violated by the state in the name of ideology. As a consequence the networks through which civility is normally produced and reproduced have been destroyed. A collapse of values in Iraq has therefore coincided with the destruction of the public realm for uncoerced human association. In these conditions, the first task of a new politics is to reject barbarism and reconstitute civility.

After the Gulf War, this long history of violations began to exert its legacy. In a dramatically weakened regime consumed by the knowledge that it can no longer control society as it used to, even draconian punishment laws of the sort I have been discussing were not enough. The regime turned to inculcating sectarianism, confessionalism, and tribalism as its new legitimating instruments of rule. If Saddam Hussein is still in power in Iraq, it is not only because he has consistently outwitted a succession of American administrations; it is principally because the Sunni populace that he is trying to forge into his new (and considerably reduced) social base is rightly afraid of what will happen to it when he is gone.

"People are terrified of what they see," said one Iraqi intellectual residing in Baghdad, who insisted on remaining anonymous. "If the regime falls, you can imagine the chaos that will result, with the poor attacking the less poor. Nearly everyone here has arms, and the country is slipping into chaos. Sometimes I think the regime encourages the idea of a breakdown. It's like saying, 'See what could happen?' if they were no longer around."

Victims and victimizers change places with the greatest of ease. It has happened often enough in the history of the Middle East. Ordinary people who are living in the experience inside Iraq understand this (even if nationalist intellectuals sitting outside don't). And they draw obvious political conclusions from that understanding, seeking to avoid at any cost the drama of endlessly reciprocating cruelties into which they fear they will inexorably be drawn.

Almost any post-Ba'thist future in Iraq is going to be like walking a tightrope, balancing the legitimate grievances of all who have suffered against the knowledge that if everyone is held accountable who is in fact guilty, the country will also be torn apart. Iraq after Saddam is going to be a country in which justice is both the first thing that everybody wants and the most difficult thing for anyone to deliver.

The experience of cruelty, of seeing into the bottom of the abyss, can turn those who inflict it or who are subjected to it in on themselves, or it can help them reach outward in the urge to remake and affirm life. Such an affirmation extends civility into the very same world of cruel facts that act constantly to dismantle it. In itself, of course, cruelty does not guarantee anything, least of all the emergence of something like forgiveness or toleration. But the possibility exists of allowing it to open a window otherwise closed to us, a window through which to consider changing the rules by which our lives are organized by those with power over us.

"In a dark time, the eye begins to see," begins a poem by Theodore Roethke. Artists and poets, like many of the ancient myths and legends from which they derive their inspiration, have long exploited this presence of darkness in order to open human hearts onto the world. That is what those who would overthrow Saddam Hussein now need to do.

POST SCRIPT: In the time since the events described in this article, Saddam Hussein, always the gambler, has precipitated the largest and potentially most damaging confrontation between his regime and the combined resources of the United Nations and the United States. The confrontation came to a head with the expulsion of U.S. weapons-of-mass-destruction inspectors in October 1997 and ended five months later with a deal brokered by the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, who said in a press conference in Baghdad that Saddam "really wanted to do the right thing" and has shown "courage, wisdom, flexibility." Annan's conclusion that "I think I can do business" with Saddam completely overturns the political environment

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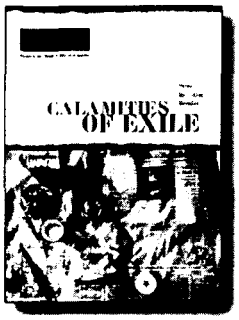

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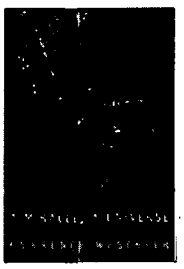

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that existed since the end of the Gulf War. No wonder the deal sought by Bill Clinton and brokered by Annan was greeted in Baghdad as "a great victory" by Tariq Aziz. It is. No one should doubt that a dangerous new dimension has been injected into the already volatile politics of the Middle East. The regime of Saddam Hussein is out of the cold, and even as I write, the United States is withdrawing troops from the Gulf that it hastily sent there to deal with a crisis that was carefully prepared and deliberately stage-managed over a one-and-a-half-year period by the Iraqi dictator.

In the meantime, the violence inside Iraq continues unabated, with reports that the regime began clearing out its prisons in December 1997 in a cost-cutting exercise that involved executing inmates (a list of four hundred people in the Abu Ghreib prison just outside Baghdad was shown to visiting relatives, who were told not to waste their time if the name of the person they had come to visit was on that list). Along with the violence is the growing realization in the weapons-inspection community that for all the progress that has been made in uncovering actual weapons of mass destruction and obtaining official admission from the regime that it did fill at least twenty-five missile warheads with anthrax and botulin toxin spores, Saddam Hussein's intention and capability to rebuild his chemical and biological weapons arsenal as soon as the world community issues him a final clean bill of health remain as strong as ever. Iraq still has not accounted for tons of growth medium for toxic spores proven by the inspectors to have existed in Iraq, a teaspoonful of which could wipe out a whole city.

KANAN MAKIYA is also the author of *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising and the Arab World* (Norton, 1993) and *The Monument: Art, Vulgarity and Responsibility in Iraq* (University of California Press, 1991). He is currently teaching at Brandeis University.

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Politics By Other Means?

Democracy and the Clinton Crisis

Andrew Arato and Jean Cohen

SINCE JANUARY the American media have been obsessed with sex, scandal, and lurid sensationalism in an unprecedented way. This has baffled and amused outside observers, especially Europeans, who are always ready to sneer at this country's "puritanical" and hypocritical attitudes toward sexuality. Foreign commentators have professed amazement that an array of alleged peccadillos could undermine the most powerful officeholder in the world. The French and the Swedes, among others, seem to handle these things with so much more civility, discretion, and panache. Many Americans would also like to dismiss the whole affair as trivial or as an obvious attempt to "get Clinton" that has made political use of sexual moralism, lawyers' dirty tricks, rich right-wingers, and media madness. But there are much more serious matters at stake. Certainly Kenneth Starr's ties to the extreme right are there for all to see; undoubtedly, Clinton's rebound from the Republican congressional victory of 1994 has been stalled. More important, however, the direction taken by the investigation of Clinton has come to pose real dangers to personal freedoms, to the integrity of the electoral processes, to the office of the presidency, and to the very structure of American constitutional democracy.

Democracy and Public Opinion

But the news is not all bad. This affair has also revealed certain surprising strengths in American democracy, particularly the astonishing vitality and relative independence of public opinion.

Constitutional democracy relies on two fundamental components. The first—let's call it the liberal-constitutional aspect—is an institutional design that secures the election of competent, responsible officials who respect the constitutional order and encourage alternation among political elites or parties. The second, democratic, aspect is political responsiveness based on genuine popular participation and the influence of public opinion. Universal suffrage and periodic elections are necessary but not sufficient conditions of accountability and popular control. Equally important is the *civil public sphere*; that is, the domain that informs the electorate about issues and choices, promotes discussion that can lead to democratic demands, and brings popular concerns to the attention of decision makers. Freedoms of press, speech, association, and assembly are preconditions of a democracy's civil public sphere. Its viability also presupposes a political culture that cannot simply be designed, and which may actually shrivel under even a liberal democratic constitution. Radical cultural criticism led many of us to think that however democratic the formal institutions of contemporary capitalist societies may be, popular control and accountability of government had vanished due to the decline of the civil public sphere—supposedly an unavoidable effect of the mass media and the culture industries. The elite theory of democracy, which in its original form considered manipulation and propaganda to be the normal forms of political communication, virtually admitted as much.

It was easy enough to believe that mass media—radio, film, television—drew into the public discussion broad segments of the population, albeit at the price of undermining the public's capacity for rational deliberation. It seems to us, however, that the relationship between the media and public opinion in the Clinton crisis shows that obituaries for a thinking and critical civil public have been prema-

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ture. In fact, we may be witnessing a trend in the opposite direction.

Despite some timid dissent, the media blitz that began last January aimed to convict the president politically before he was legally proven guilty. Why? The reasons range from increased newspaper sales and high ratings to the hubris of reporters who ache to become today's Woodward and Bernstein. The campaign should have succeeded, because it was not Hillary Clinton's "right-wing conspiracy" (a plausible idea) but *Newsweek*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and ABC-TV that played dominant roles. The other television channels and popular magazines were only a shade more self-restrained. The mainstream media boosted its audience through a kind of self-tabloidization. The message it hammered home was: This president is unfit for office because of his "character" as revealed by sexual escapades and his illegal efforts to cover them up. Attempts by the president's side to use legal means of self-defense against the powerful if uncoordinated onslaught by the media and special prosecutor Kenneth Starr were dismissed as "spin doctoring" at best or obstruction of justice at worst. The mainstream press found relatively little to criticize in Starr's questionable practices.

YET IN THE face of all this, popular support for Clinton continued to increase along with negative perceptions of Starr. The immense majority of letters to the editor in all the papers that we have seen confirmed the testimony of countless polls. This public response, along with a widespread sense that the investigation has gone on too long, clearly had a tremendous political effect: Republican politicians were restrained. Moreover, would Judge Susan Webber Wright have had the courage to dismiss the Paula Jones case in another political context? Would the White House have dared to be so critical of Starr's methods?

How is it that public opinion has remained independent through all this? Until there are full and adequate survey data, one can only speculate about the reasons. The media stress economic well-being, and undoubtedly this plays a role. But Watergate also occurred in relatively good economic times, and popular opinion eventually turned against Richard Nixon. Current polls, however, don't indicate that a similar development is likely. At the least, several things are going on. Here are some possibilities to consider:

- The role of the right and the mainstream media has been so transparent that it invites skepticism. Citizens ask: Why do they want so badly to get rid of him? Are they so holy? Do they take us for moralistic fools who cannot distinguish private vice from public virtue?
- The attempt to reverse judicially the results of a democratic election is unpopular. In Nixon's case something else was at play—the subversion of the entire electoral process. Whatever Clinton's alleged sins or illegalities, they do not touch constitutional issues or threaten the democratic process. His opponents, on the other hand, are perceived as trying to use every means available to undo the 1996 elections.
- Invasions of privacy—wiretapping, sting operations, forcing close relatives to testify, hunting for peripherally related private documents—are deeply disliked by Americans and accepted only when invisible or justified by a significant public interest (such as thwarting organized crime). Starr's methods were highly visible and had no such justification.
- Even if the media, along with some political fundamentalists, twist the feminist slogan that "the personal is political" into a justification for intrusive policing of sexual conduct, most Americans think the line between public and private, however shifting, is worth preserving. Consensual and wanted sexual relations between adults are widely understood to be the business only of those immediately and intimately concerned.

These attitudes provide the background to public opinion in the Clinton scandals. The independence of public opinion has also been reinforced by alternative channels of communication, discussion, and opinion formation. Polls have played an important role because their publication allows people to see that their own judgments are not idiosyncratic, even if they are repeatedly told otherwise by "experts."

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They find that others feel as they do, and that this is not due to indifference to ethical issues (as the religious right suggests) but to alternative—call them postconventional—moral insights. These include tolerance for a plurality of forms of intimacy together with an insistence on the spirit rather than the letter of the law. These attitudes have also been fostered by growing diversity in the electronic media and proliferation of forums of discussion, especially live talk shows in which varied ways of understanding the crisis are constantly presented. These shows monitor the spin doctors and openly discuss their own potential impact on politics and public opinion. All this, combined with twenty-four-hour-a-day reporting, constant broadcasting of opinion polls, the Internet, but also the likes of electronic gossip Matt Drudge, has at least two consequences. First, people are increasingly alert to the recursive relation between public opinion and the media. Second, the decline in journalistic ethics becomes obvious, particularly when it comes to confidentiality and verification of sources. Journalism, as a profession, no longer has the same control over the media outlets.

With tabloidization of the "serious" outlets, programs like CNBC's Geraldo Rivera show and CNN's *Burden of Proof*, both known for sensationalism, have assumed the task of promoting serious public discussion. The president's side was shrewd to avoid hostile interviews by the mainstream media; instead, it concentrated on discussion programs that were previously assumed to be mere entertainment. All this helped to transform latent support for the president into an increasingly articulate public perspective. The plurality and flexibility of the new media technologies are quite impressive in this regard.

It should be added that the president also gained a great deal of support for his performance (and Hillary's) under fire. His ability to compartmentalize his roles has helped others do likewise, and to judge him primarily by political, not personal, ethics: namely his public role and public virtues. Efforts to demonize him only enlarge his personality and enhance his charisma. Nixon also had ample opportunity to appear presidential, but he was transformed into a demonic figure.

Politics and Law

Clinton's critics insist that popular attitudes are irrelevant; it's the law that counts. The investigation, they say, is not about sexual conduct but perjury, subornation of perjury, and the obstruction of justice. Both assertions are partially false. Starr is settling in for a long siege due to Republican reluctance—in the face of public opinion—to attempt an impeachment before the upcoming elections. And Whitewater, with its own issues of perjury and obstruction of justice, never seriously challenged Clinton because it lacked a vehicle to stir up a mass audience—like sex in the Monica Lewinsky case. But let's bracket these matters and assume that the Jones and Lewinsky episodes are only about the rule of law and the principle that no one is above the law. If that is so, there is every reason to argue that there is a dangerous blurring of the boundary, never absolute, between law and politics.

Justice Antonin Scalia was right to suspect that the special prosecutor statute can, in the wrong hands, lead to a dangerous politicization of the law. The special prosecutor is accountable to no one, has unlimited time and resources, and is appointed to investigate a single official. This provides a strong incentive to pursue an almost permanent investigation. It can only be worse when a special prosecutor is appointed despite obvious political conflicts of interests, and when his competence is readily extended from one case to another (as it has been thanks to the weakness of Attorney General Janet Reno).

Commentator Jeffrey Rosen was right when he pointed out that the confluence of the special-prosecutor statute with the Supreme Court decision to allow a civil sexual harassment suit, with potentially unlimited discovery procedures, against a sitting president, has set in motion a process that will be difficult to restrain by political or legal means. Even with dismissal of the civil case and disputes about the relevance of perjury where the materiality of testimony (Lewinsky's and Clinton's) is in serious doubt,

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it is up to Starr alone to decide whether or not to continue. He responds with an appeal to the rule of law, which also motivated the unanimous Supreme Court decision in *Jones v. Clinton*.

But won't the rule of law be damaged by strong—and well-founded—suspicions that the agents of the law are merely carrying out politics by other means? that law is being used to cloak politics in a way that squarely contradicts the emerging democratic will of the population? The special-prosecutor law was enacted to protect the republic against corrosive illegality by power holders. It responded to a real need, even if it lacked adequate safeguards. The Republicans, remembering Watergate and Iran-*contra*, always opposed it. Now that Starr has trivialized and politicized it, few legislators will favor its renewal next year. This is a pity: the law should be reformed, not dumped.

Politicization of the law is being complemented by a legal derailing of politics. For months now, domestic policy making has been hostage to Starr's investigation. Even more worrisome is the relentless use of the subpoena powers of the special prosecutor to reach deep into the White House in quest of documents and testimony that may have only the slightest relevance to his case. Since the president's public and private personae have been blurred in this matter, the pursuit of the private man inevitably weakens the public one. All this might be justifiable if the constitutional stakes ("high crimes and misdemeanors") were great enough, but it is preposterous to undermine the presidency in a truly marginal business. The campaign of organized leaks and revelations makes the presidency seem ridiculous. And how can it be functional if Clinton's confidential discussions with close advisers must be revealed to a grand jury, and then can be leaked by the prosecutors? If loyal subordinates of a head of government can be ruined through legal costs, whether or not they have anything to hide, then all capable people will be driven from this type of public service.

Starr's partisans might claim that the most powerful officeholder on earth needs elaborate supervision, and his power can well survive it. This was the mistaken attitude of the Supreme Court as well (even if it did not anticipate all that has happened). The rule of law dogmatism makes erroneous assumptions about the structural strength of the presidency. Compared to a prime minister in a parliamentary system, an American president has great constraints. The contexts of the "imperial presidency"—the New Deal, world war, cold war—now belong to the past. Since Eisenhower, only Ronald Reagan completed two terms. The president's room to move on domestic policy is also restrained by divided government and party discipline. What he can do depends on political skill, coherent strategy, and political prestige, all of which are hampered by endless legal battles and the atmosphere of scandal. But Congress is also constrained by the president's veto power and the threat of filibuster by a member of his party in the Senate.

All of this creates the prospect of an immobile central government. Zealots of various persuasions may think this fine, but it ought to alarm democrats. If we're right and there is a potential revival of dynamic and sophisticated civil publics, that would be a hopeful sign for American democracy; but if deliberations cannot be effectively translated into decisions by democratic institutions, a problematic situation arises. Public opinion may now protect the president, but it is powerless to end a process that threatens to weaken both him and the presidency.

Ironically, it is Kenneth Starr's unchecked power and ideologically motivated rule-of-law absolutism that, in the end, threatens to weaken seriously one of the central instruments of American democracy. This time the threat to democracy—and to the law—originates in the judicial branch, not the presidency as in Watergate. The entire picture is further complicated by the decline of professional ethics among lawyers and prosecutors. The absence of checks on the legal profession is alarming: just consider the willingness to leak grand jury testimony and other legal documents in a scramble for media prestige and the transformation of the adversarial system into a sport event (remember O.J.).

Gender Equality vs. Private Autonomy

If a Clinton impeachment led to a genuine na-

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tional re-examination of the problem of sexual harassment, it would be worth it. So wrote Michael Tomasky in the Spring 1998 issue of *Dissent* ("The President and the Prosecutor," Spring 1998). We ask, in turn, and not only because of our (apparently) differing evaluation of this president and the presidency, wouldn't the cost include some of our personal-autonomy and due-process rights as well?

Sexual harassment *is* a pervasive problem, and it strongly contributes to gender inequality. Moreover, we find questionable Judge Wright's assertion that a single "outrageous" incident, as alleged by Paula Jones, does not constitute harassment (whatever the specifics of Arkansas law). But she was right to dismiss the case given the obvious falsity of the Supreme Court's earlier assumptions in *Jones v. Clinton*, and also in view of the "outrageous" politicization of the case by Jones's lawyers. The Supreme Court, we know, thought a civil suit needn't take up too much of the president's time, as if the danger were simply distraction from official duties and not the threat of politicization of a juridical procedure!

MOREOVER, this is the wrong case with which to establish precedents in the area of sexual harassment. It can, however, supply us with some lessons. First and foremost, the Supreme Court should reverse its earlier decision overruling Judge Wright, which is what allowed *Jones v. Clinton* to proceed before the presidential term was over. Second, we need to define sexual harassment more precisely so that loopholes used by Judge Wright, however justifiable in this special case, can be closed. Third, we need to restore due process in sexual harassment cases. In particular, there need to be restrictions on the almost unlimited process of discovery. Consensual and wanted sexual relationships, whether of the accuser or the accused, should not be the subject of inquisitions. To assume that such relations become harassment if the partners are "unequal" is pernicious; to assume that people—sexually active or not—somehow provoke their own harassment is no less so.

Jones v. Clinton teaches us above all that there are two values at stake in current sexual harassment cases: gender equality and private autonomy. If the value of gender equality forces us to examine critically the president's conduct, that of private autonomy should make us wary of his persecutors and a judicial inquiry that is far too invasive. No worker should be subject to the kind of behavior alleged by Paula Jones: it is discriminatory, creates a hostile environment, and fear of future repercussion. At the same time, no one—even if charged in a civil suit—should have to undergo public and hostile dissection of his or her private sexual life. No one should be forced to testify under oath about every aspect of his or her sexual history. No one should be accused of perjury or the subornation of perjury for trying to protect consensual and wanted intimacy with another adult. No one's intimate life should be electronically recorded with impunity. The correct reply to interrogations of one's sex life is not defiant public confession, as Ellen Willis believes (*Dissent*, Spring 1998), but a strong public statement that these questions are out of line and nobody's business.

Here Jeffrey Rosen is wrong to blame feminists and sexual harassment law per se for the intrusive policing of sexual conduct that often accompanies workplace sex codes and harassment suits. The morals police pursued people long before such suits became actionable. Today, so-called family values, together with sexism and gender inequalities, not feminism, foster an inquisitorial atmosphere. "Privacy" is too often a camouflage for gender sub-

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ordination at home and at work. What is needed is a reorientation of sexual harrasment law and privacy rights, not their abolition. The goal ought to be the protection of everyone's personal autonomy and equality, and the punishment of discrimination and injustice.

Freedom of Intimacy

Even if the possibility of revived common deliberation warrants optimism, we should not underestimate the vulnerabilities of free public life. Democracy and personal freedom presuppose one another. Without personal autonomy and a secure zone of personal privacy, democratic public freedom cannot be guaranteed. Insecurity and fear of exposure have a chilling effect on speech and action in *all* domains of life. Today, freedom of intimate association must be at the core of personal autonomy. If wanted consensual intimacy between adults is not safe from unreasonable search and seizure, interrogation by prosecutors, grand juries, the police, or the FBI, then everyone is a potential informer and the mutual trust, the sine qua non of intimacy, is destroyed. What is at stake is not the right to hide secret (and by implication shameful) acts, but the sort of privacy that constitutes the meaning and very possibility of intimacy.

Moreover, if there is a revival of harsh sex laws privileging one form of intimate association—say heterosexual, monogamous marriage—over others, the politics of scandal will always be available to discredit anyone who "deviates." This, of course, is the agenda of puritanical social conservatives and sex Victorians. (The latter exist across the political spectrum and include some progressives and some feminists.) But it is a losing scenario, as the American public has now revealed. Freedom of intimate association is today being pluralized and democratized across gender (and, hopefully, sexualities). There is no longer a consensus on the "one right way" to conduct such relationships; tolerance of this pluralism should be fostered, not undermined, by the law.

Freedom of intimate associations must be protected against the traditionalists of the right and puritanical fundamentalists of whatever persuasion. Legal regulation in the intimate domain should only be for protection against injustice (such as violence, abuse, fraud, and the like) or to facilitate wanted and rewarding intimate relationships. Let's hope that the American public can teach its elites that moralism about sex should be gone from our politics—with the politics of scandal in quick retreat. ●

ANDREW ARATO is the Dorothy Hirshon Professor in Political and Social Theory at the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research. JEAN COHEN is professor of political science at Columbia University. They are the joint authors of *Civil Society and Political Theory*.

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Can HMOs Be Fixed?

Rashi Fein

In part one of this essay ("The HMO Revolution: How It Happened, What It Means," *Dissent*, Spring 1998) I explored the rapid growth of HMOs, noted potential advantages that prepaid group practices held over traditional fee-for-service arrangements, and considered a number of important shortcomings of HMO/managed-care organizations. I concluded that the greatest difficulty and danger for patients and caregivers lay with the expansion of for-profit health maintenance organizations. Profit is not "incidental" to such entities. It is not something that just "happens" during the course of normal activity, something that those connected with the enterprise are not aware of until the accounting results of the year's activities are available. Rather, profits are consciously and, sometimes, avidly sought; this quest affects the behavior of everyone connected with the enterprise—physicians, nurses, and all the others who deliver health care services.

While some not-for-profit HMOs are less than paragons of virtue, only sloppy thinking would lead us to condemn the general concept of an HMO. Not-for-profit HMOs should be criticized when they misbehave, but our strongest criticisms should be reserved for the for-profit sector where impacts are more extensive and pervasive. Indeed, it is often the presence of for-profit HMOs that, because of the power of competition, leads not-for-profit entities to behave as if they, too, were seeking profits, thus violating their community-service ethos. Various legislative and regulatory changes designed to "manage" or temper competition and affecting all HMOs would benefit not-for-profit entities by forcing the for-profits to function in more responsible ways. Regrettably, however, we must recognize that it would be difficult to regulate and monitor the day-to-day behavior of for-profits whose actions reflect their value system and who are accountable to stockholders rather than to the general community. The history of efforts to constrain the behavior of for-profit firms does not provide grounds for optimism; the market's damaging effects on the ethos of medicine cannot readily be circumscribed.

In part two of this essay I will offer some suggestions on ways to improve the financing and organization of American health care. For-profit managed care, however, is not all that ails American medicine, and efforts to regulate it are only a subset of the actions necessary to improve the performance of the American health sector. Therefore, I will turn at the end to other problems afflicting American medicine.

Paying for Health Care

Most Americans have some form of private or public protection against the unpredictable costs of medical care; most of the over one trillion dollars of national health expenditures ($3,759 per person), of which almost 90 percent is devoted to personal health care, derive from private insurance ($1,225), public Medicare insurance ($738) and Medicaid entitlement ($536). Out-of-pocket payments by consumers at the point of service account for $621, non-personal health care expenditures (that is, research, construction, net cost of private health insurance, and public health activities) account for the remaining $639.

Of course, there is no "average" American with those per capita health care expenditures. Most Americans do have some (often, less than adequate) private or public health insurance, but forty-two million individuals, one out of six of our neighbors, have none. Furthermore, both the percentage and number of per-

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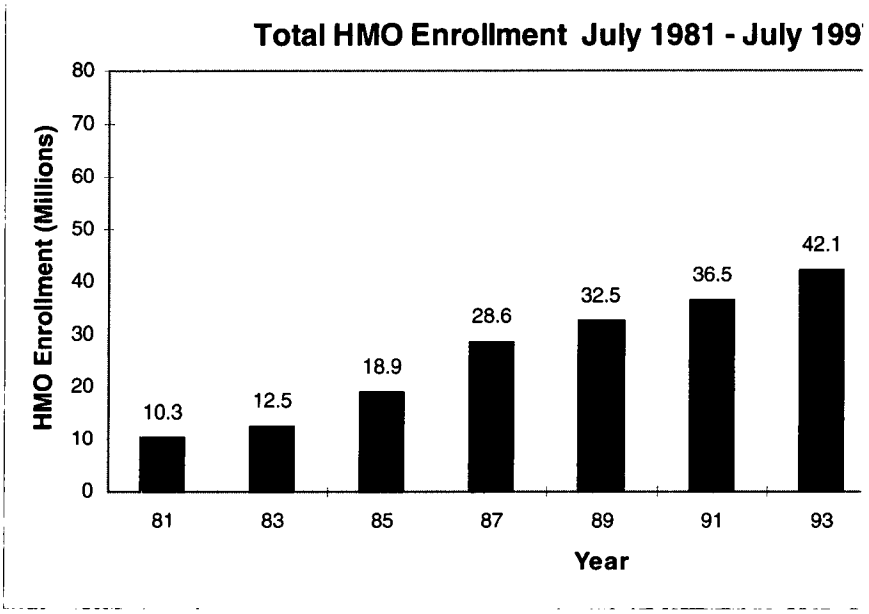
sons without insurance is growing (and has been year by year). This is the case in spite of the fact that the United States has a low unemployment rate. It is a fallacy to suppose that having a job translates into having insurance.

When private employment-linked insurance began its rapid growth during the post–World War II period, policy analysts believed that eventually the voluntary system would provide coverage for all Americans except for a limited number of individuals, largely those who were very poor and with only tenuous links to employment. Presumably, in the fullness of time, this "residual" might receive assistance via some combination of federal and state programs.

The success of voluntary not-for-profit insurance attracted for-profit insurance firms into the health field. Competition between for-profit and not-for-profit insurance companies (largely the Blues: Blue Cross and Blue Shield) resulted in the substitution of "experience rating"—where premiums reflect the health care experience and costs associated with a defined group, say, of employees—for the Blues' "community rating" under which premiums reflect average costs and average risks in the entire community. By excluding high-risk individuals from the pool, for-profit firms were able to keep premiums below those quoted by community-rating organizations that accepted everyone, including the sick and high-risks who wanted (and were financially able) to join. Inevitably, as healthier patients left and as community-rated programs were left with the highest risks, their premiums rose. As they grew more expensive and became weaker and weaker, still more employers and subscribers left in search of lower costs, and so on in a downward spiral.

As a consequence, analysts came to recognize that individuals with above-average health care costs would face difficulty in obtaining insurance. Put simply, in a voluntary system, many individuals would want to disassociate themselves from high-risk persons. "Not in my group" was the health insurance equivalent of "Not in my backyard."

The aged faced both these and other difficulties: they were high risk, without employer insurance assistance, without the administrative economies from group enrollment, and with low incomes. In response to the various failures of the voluntary employment-linked model, Medicare—the federal hospital and physicians' services insurance program (importantly, not including drugs) for those sixty-five years old and over—was enacted in 1965. It was expanded in 1972 to include the disabled. Medicaid, a federal-state entitlement program



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largely for the poor, although not for all of them, was also enacted in 1965. In addition, a number of states developed programs to assist hospitals that served a disproportionate number of patients unable to pay for care.

NEVERTHELESS, it became clear that we would not reach universal coverage by combining a series of programs, each covering a defined, but limited, part of the population. Geographic mobility as well as changes in demographic, socioeconomic, and employment characteristics meant that there would be massive inefficiencies and coverage gaps in such an approach. People would shift between categories (for example, too poor yesterday, too "rich" today, perhaps too poor tomorrow); they would have to be tracked, an inevitably costly and imperfect process. Furthermore, the limited benefits of much insurance (even including Medicare) and the presence of deductibles and co-payments meant that some individuals would spend a high fraction of their income for health care and/or be left without needed services.

Most serious students of American health care believed that a universal program, in which Medicare could be one building block, was the appropriate answer to our increasingly fractionated system. Although a number of proposals were advanced, and some members of Congress argued for universality under a Social Security or Medicare-for-all approach, the only serious debate about national health insurance since the early 1970s has taken place around limited proposals developed under Presidents Richard Nixon and Bill Clinton. These eschewed the social-insurance, tax-supported mechanism and called for a continuation of employment linkage and employer contributions (with government "patches" to assist the unemployed, those withdrawn from the labor force, and those who earned low wages or worked for low-profit employers). Yet, even these (nonradical and quite inefficient) programs that extended existing private financing could not be enacted. We still have not dealt with the problem of universal and equal access.

Were this the whole story of the distribution of health insurance, persons without insurance would face the same difficult conditions that the uninsured faced in earlier periods. That would be bad enough. Regrettably, their situation has become even more distressing. As employers became increasingly concerned about rising health care costs and as their understanding of health care financing became ever more sophisticated, they pressed for an end to the cross-subsidization mechanisms that helped finance care (especially hospital care) for the uninsured. Although a number of larger cities have public hospitals paid for by local or county governments, most uninsured individuals have been served by not-for-profit community hospitals. Care was funded through cross subsidies (charging insured patients more than the cost of care in order to generate funds for those without insurance). Those mechanisms have come under attack as private insurance and managed-care organizations compete to reduce payments and premiums and as each employer bargains more vigorously for lower premiums. One way to save dollars is by reducing or eliminating any "add-ons" that helped pay for the care of the uninsured.

I recall attending a lecture on health care cost control and listening to a director of one of America's major auto companies proudly proclaim that the firm had stabilized its health-insurance premiums and health care costs. He attributed success to a series of programs calling for second opinions, revised medical protocols, special review procedures, emphasis on preventive care, as well as hard bargaining with the hospital sector. He implied that employers who had not cut costs were irresponsible and profligate.

He was followed by the head of the hospital in a community where the auto manufacturer was the dominant employer, who spoke about the impact of this "success" on the local hospital's ability to take care of the uninsured. In striving for the "best deal" it could cut, the manufacturer had withdrawn the "extra" funds that helped subsidize the care of those not fortunate enough to have insurance coverage. Unwilling (and legally unable) to turn uninsured patients away, not ready to close services that attract nonpaying patients (for example, outpatient and emergency care),

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the hospital was eating into its endowment and would soon face bankruptcy. Cost-containment efforts had not reduced the costs of necessary care. Instead, they had saved money for one employer by withdrawing funds that provided care to a significant part of the community.

This story can be repeated across America. Voluntary cross-subsidies are hardly the preferred instrument of redistribution goals: they are less effective than general tax mechanisms. Nevertheless, over the years cross-subsidies—in health care as in other fields such as telephone service and airline travel—made it possible to finance services for those who could not purchase them on their own. Market competition makes such measures vulnerable. The attack on the cross-subsidy form of sharing (without an adequate replacement) is, I fear, a symptom of a deeper problem: an increasing emphasis on "what's best for me" rather than "what's best for us"—on efficiency rather than justice.

America's failure to enact comprehensive universal health insurance does not derive from our inability to finance such a program. Providing coverage to the almost 16 percent of the population now without insurance would not add 16 percent, or anything approaching that, to the nation's health bill. Nor would it expand the demand for health care beyond the nation's capacity to deliver the needed services. Many of the uninsured are children and young adults who, generally, are healthy and require few medical services and very little expensive hospital care. Furthermore, many of the uninsured (and underinsured) do receive necessary medical services, albeit often only when their illnesses have become severe.

These factors help explain why, over the years, the usual estimates have been that a universal and comprehensive insurance program would add something in the neighborhood of 5 percent to the nation's health expenditures. Furthermore, cost projections of social insurance or single-payer national programs have shown that within three to five years after enactment, health expenditures would be less than they would be if current funding patterns continue. The elimination of high administrative costs and inefficiencies inherent in a system with multiple insurers (Medicare's administrative costs, for example, are much lower than costs in the private sector) would yield substantial savings. At best, our existing system is efficient at doing things that in a well-designed system would be unnecessary; it is efficient at performing inherently inefficient tasks.

THIS ARGUMENT raises two questions. The first is obvious: if most of those without adequate insurance are healthy or mostly receive care when ill, why bother with a universal program? Isn't the fact that such a program would add so little to the nation's health bill proof that it isn't very important? The answer, of course, rests on the recognition that there is a distribution around the average: though most of us are healthy, some are sick, and some are very sick. Medical insurance, like all insurance against the financial impact of improbable but costly events, rests on principles of risk sharing. The fact that untoward events are improbable is an argument for, rather than against, health insurance.

Nevertheless, in supporting an insurance program with an upper limit on coverage of individual health care expenditures, the Nixon administration argued that very few Americans would exceed the maximum and face financial hardship. In reality, the fact that few would be hurt meant that it would not be costly to cover those few and that the cap was not warranted.

Nor can the argument against universal insurance rest on the presumed "fact" that all who need care and cannot pay for it manage to receive it. That may be true of some (though often not in timely fashion), but surely not of all. Of course, ill health is the result of many factors: income, occupation, housing, nutrition, and social conditions. Yet it is also affected by one's ability to purchase necessary pharmaceuticals and follow therapeutic regimens, by continuity of care and early diagnosis, and by the quantity and quality of medical intervention. Although most illness is self-limiting, the physician visit may provide valuable reassurance, reduce anxiety and/or pain, or speed recovery—all matters of value that

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those who have the means are quite willing to pay for.

There is more. Health insurance is also about dignity: the way people obtain what society has come to regard as important. The conditions under which one receives care, and what one has to do to receive it, help define the community. The statement "universal health insurance is the hallmark of a civilized society" speaks to the issue of dignity.

Finally, guaranteed insurance would benefit the many who already have private insurance. Universal coverage would not increase their personal costs, but would offer a measure of valuable security that they would be insured in the future. To obtain all these benefits for an initial increase of about 5 percent in public health care costs seems most advantageous.

Those who have argued for national health insurance have constructed various programs to reach that goal, with different proportions of private and federal funding, different private and public administrative loci of control and responsibility, and different organization of medical care delivery. Nevertheless, none of the many approaches has had sufficient support to be enacted in even one branch of Congress. I turn now to why this is so and what we might do about it.

General Issues

These are the two major problems of the American health care system: (1) the organization of care delivery, especially its increasing emphasis on for-profit organizations and (2) the financing of medical costs, especially the growth in the number of individuals who are uninsured, underinsured, or otherwise unable to meet the high costs of medical care.

We need to be aware, however, that there are other problems whose resolution should not be determined by market forces. Among the matters that we (by "we" I imply collective action, most often through government) will have to address are the funding of research and education as Medicare and HMOs reduce the support previously provided for these endeavors; the implications for Medicare of the increasing number of very elderly and the high costs of their care; the plight of the elderly (and others) who use many services (especially pharmaceuticals and long-term care) not covered by Medicare or by private insurance policies; potential conflicts of interest as the lines between industry and the academy become blurred and researchers and clinical investigators are increasingly supported by, and receive stock options from, private for-profit firms.

That brief (and necessarily incomplete) list does not include the medical challenges we face as individuals and as a community. It abstracts from the human implications and side effects of disease; it does not include rationing, pain control, issues connected with death and dying—all of which have an economic dimension and are influenced by the flow of funds. We delude ourselves if we fail to recognize that many of our medical-ethical discussions are defined and constrained by economic arrangements. Nor does it pay adequate attention to the nonmedical implications of changes in health care organization. I cannot forbear noting one important, but largely ignored, "side effect" that stems from the reduction in job growth as a consequence of changes in the patterns of health care delivery. Many years ago, when New York City was in the midst of one of its recurrent fiscal crises, Mayor Abraham Beame proposed closing some city hospitals. In its front page story on a demonstration against the closure, the *New York Times* quoted a community leader: "Mr. Mayor you are taking away our..." and then noted that the story continued on one of the inside pages. I turned the pages, certain that the next words would be "health care." I was wrong. The statement read, "you are taking away our jobs."

We must remember that the health sector generates jobs and that many of those jobs are held by members of minority populations. Men and women of color who clean the hospital rooms and minister to patient needs, and who are "downsized" as hospital beds are closed, are not likely to find ready employment in the expanding financial-services sector. The impact of employment cutbacks as we reduce hospital utilization shows up not only as reductions in family income but as a weakening of the financial underpinnings of many urban neighborhoods. The dangers to urban and mi-

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nority communities and the explosive social implications, if those heretofore stable sources of employment and income decline, cannot be overemphasized.

These issues won't be resolved by "market forces." Health care markets are not truly competitive. Nor do they take account of our grossly unequal distribution of income and wealth. There is no reason to believe that the market would allocate health care resources in ways that meet the needs of the entire community; there *is* reason to believe that resources would flow to those parts of the community with the most ample financial assets. Socially acceptable outcomes require coherent community planning and purposeful intervention.

THIS IS NOT a startling statement. Except for those who would give free reign to economic forces, most analysts have long agreed that there is a health care role for government. I would argue that the role is substantial, that government needs to act in a comprehensive fashion, and that partial "solutions" will probably prove ineffective. They have untoward side effects and, often, are negated by larger external forces. A health care cliché is that "the system is like a balloon: if you push in here, it pops out there." Health care systems require systematic approaches.

Yet we know that it is difficult to enact overarching "solutions." In our nonparliamentary political system, one hesitates to offer coherent and internally consistent proposals certain to be altered, amended, restructured, and rewritten by legislators not bound by any party discipline. This, together with the system of checks and balances, divided government, and the federalist structure, has led to an inherently conservative political system characterized by incrementalism, with a bias in favor of the status quo. Although it is true that this need not always be so (for example, the depression and the period during the Johnson administration when we enacted War on Poverty, civil rights legislation, and Medicare and Medicaid), I believe the forces that make for incrementalism, for small steps gingerly taken, are greater today than in previous periods. In part that reflects the ascendancy of economics and its emphasis on marginalism as a pattern of thought and on analytical techniques involving measurement (of whatever can be measured) and cost/benefit calculations. These are the antithesis of the bold and comprehensive thinking represented, for example, by the British National Health Service or the American Head Start program.

On the one hand, we are told that incrementalism is the way things are done in the United States and that "half a loaf" (and, by inference, why not a quarter, an eighth, a crumb?) is better than none. On the other hand, we are told to "make no small plans, because they lack the power to move men's souls." We know that even small steps often require the expenditure of considerable energy and effort. Was Ted Kennedy wrong when he shifted to incrementalism from universal social insurance (though in principle still supportive of a Canadian-like single-payer approach) because he did not want to hold hostage those who would be helped by incremental steps and did not believe that a more comprehensive solution was possible? Is President Clinton right in proposing a Medicare buy-in for Americans who have not yet turned sixty-five, even though only a small proportion of those who might benefit would be able to pay the out-of-pocket premiums? How do we weigh the fact that when incrementalism helps some (but not all), those left behind have even less political power?

There are no general answers to such questions. Each of us must choose. It would therefore be irresponsible to offer only a choice of all or nothing. Some limited actions do seem desirable and, perhaps, achievable. Still, I discuss them with some hesitation because I do not want to deflect attention from the need for a more comprehensive approach.

Recommendations

(1) Given current attitudes about "privatization," it would seem to be a misallocation of effort to press for legislation that would convert existing for-profits to not-for-profit status and ban any new ones. But energy and effort should be devoted to slowing down the change in status (either by conversion, merger, or purchase) of not-for-profit

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entities. State attorneys general have the responsibility to investigate and approve such changes, to make certain that charitable assets are not dissipated but valued appropriately and protected. Attorneys general have it within their power to affect materially the terms of any change in status and to make conversions and buyouts significantly less attractive and/or assure that one or another community benefit (for example, health foundations, care for the uninsured) is added to the "cost" of conversion. They can shine a bright light, gather information, and make certain that conversion is a public rather than a private process.

(2) An important second area for action at both state and federal levels involves the regulation and increased accountability of managed-care organizations. It is clear that patients, potential patients, and caregivers do not view HMOs as benign institutions, always operating in a responsible fashion to improve the quality of health care, reduce costs, and increase efficiency. Thus, there is a potential alliance between the general public and the medical professions in support of legislation that would rein in the power of HMOs to interfere with clinical decisions and restrict the monetary incentives that HMOs could provide to caregivers.

The legislative battles around these issues of regulation and control are likely to be intense. We will be told that these initiatives would significantly increase premiums. In general, however, that is not likely to be the case. Most of the various state proposals involve issues of disclosure (for example, of salaries, grievance and malpractice claims, percent of premium dollars spent on health care), establishment of tighter complaint and appeal procedures with review by outside parties, new standards for approval of emergency-room care, and other such provisions. Nevertheless, employers as well as HMOs and other insurers are likely to oppose regulatory legislation. The legislative battles can be won if, but only if, the public organizes effectively.

(3) Yet another area that needs to be addressed is Medicare, our most universal (in the sense that it is not income related) social-insurance health program. This is not the place for a review of ways to assure the continued presence of a strong and even more comprehensive (for example, by adding pharmaceutical benefits) Medicare program. In considering changes, we should recognize that Medicare's fiscal problem is largely due to exogenous demographic changes and to program successes in providing added years of quality life to the elderly and disabled. Except for issues of fraud, there is relatively little that can be done to reduce costs as long as the program continues to serve the eligible population. Strengthening Medicare's fiscal outlook will require an increase in revenue. Those who care about Medicare will have to become knowledgeable about the potential sources of such revenues and participate in the debates on alternative uses of funds. They will have to guard against "solutions" arrived at by increasing the age of eligibility or otherwise providing less assistance to individuals who will have difficulty purchasing private insurance. That is especially so at a time when employers are cutting back on health insurance for early retirees.

There is value in the continuing battle for (even limited) reforms of the organization and the financing of health care. We may succeed in enacting new legislation that can be built upon in succeeding years. Furthermore, political action, even on behalf of only minor improvements, is an extremely useful educational enterprise. Our democracy is strengthened by participation and, in general, one participates, organizes, carries banners, addresses envelopes, raises money, attends rallies, in favor of specific proposals, not abstractions.

DEVELOPMENT and consideration of limited proposals should meet two requirements. The first is that we think in strategic, not tactical, terms. This can lead to a "sequential" approach in which a comprehensive program would become effective in staged, predetermined steps over a defined period of time. Though some would argue that explicit timetables would doom the legislation, strategies that are implicit and hidden from view prevent the mobilization of support. Progressive legislation will not be enacted without organized support and such support will not be mobilized without discussion, debate, and edu-

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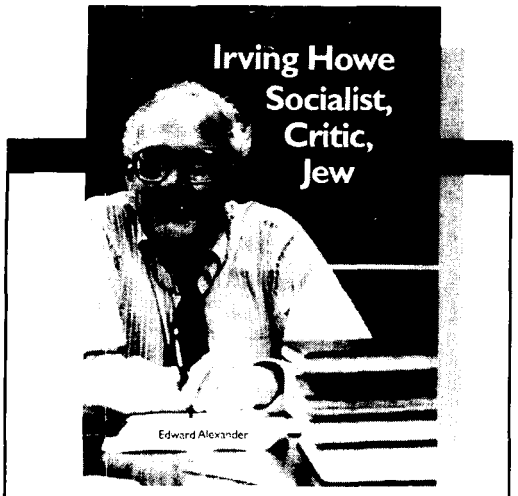

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cation. The less explicit the strategy, the less the education. America will not get national health insurance by stealth.

The second requirement is that we understand that just as the costs of care for persons in different risk groups have to be shared and that high-risk populations cannot pay the full costs of their care, so too among persons in different income groups. Low-income individuals cannot afford the high costs of insurance. A financing system that provides universal access has to be redistributive. Redistribution, too, cannot be smuggled in while no one is looking.

There are a number of incremental steps that are doable and useful. Even so, I believe left/liberals should continue to press for comprehensive change. In part that is pragmatic: one of the reasons that the nation has taken the small and incremental steps some favor is because others pressed for a universal social insurance. That is the camp readers of *Dissent* and their friends and allies should join. It is they who will question basic structures and conventional ideas, including the idea that profits are the necessary stimulus for efficiency. It is they who would question the channeling of public dollars to the for-profit private sector and who would recognize the implications for government regulation and for issues of accountability of the sharp contrast between two alternative contemporary arrangements: in education, public dollars are channeled into a public delivery system; in health care, public dollars are channeled into a private delivery system.

Finally, health care reflects the society in which it is embedded. To cure health care we must work to heal that society. None of us can do that alone. We must work together to strengthen our sense of concern, compassion, and community and so to revive the American dream. ●

RASHI FEIN is professor of the economics of medicine at Harvard Medical School. This is the second essay in a two-part series now available in pamphlet form from the Foundation for the Study of Independent Social Ideas, 521 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1700, New York, N.Y. 10017; phone 212-595-3084. Quantity discounts are available for classroom and educational use.

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A Stranger in the Village

Coming of Age in a White College

Phillip M. Richards

I AM A PROFESSOR of English at a small, selective college in central New York. Isolated in an obscure valley, the school and its surrounding village sometimes remain white with snow until late spring. A black tenured member of this community, I often feel similarly isolated in this snowy retreat from the multicultural mainstream of American life. So uncommon are other African Americans here, that the appearance of a clerk of color in the grocery store is matter for a week's conversation at the family dinner table. Like other members of the village, we are known by face; however, our race gives our visibility a strange twist. For two years I was relentlessly confused with a recently fired—he was refused tenure—African colleague. Colleagues still unaware of his departure would approach me from behind and begin a discussion of Benin masks or kleptocracy in Zaire. I appreciate this relative anonymity and have exploited it well. My previous teaching assignment was in a tiny state university on the tornado plain of northeast Arkansas. There with a young family, I finished a difficult dissertation and taught seven courses a year. I now teach five in the relative luxury of a school that affords me a computer and some funds for my scholarly work. In my frozen leisure, I rediscovered the texts of my profession. Among endless identity confusions—mostly of others but sometimes my own—I wrote my first articles, finished a book, and set out upon a career.

Few black people stay here, much less acquire tenure. And my odd success has had odder consequences. I am judged by the world around me as a role model for black students, in spite of my better judgment. The freewheeling individualism by which the rare black makes a place here is especially uncommon among middle-class African Americans. Such individualism is even less common within the large white population of the college itself, until recently a gray-flannel liberal arts college for the average and slightly above average students of the East Coast WASP elite. The students, who are hard working and well rounded, come to the college, they tell me, expecting a friendly community of like-minded people. The view of the world that has sustained me for the last ten years does not begin with that assumption.

I therefore view my surroundings with an outsider's detachment. Coming onto campus, I see a parking lot full of new Jeep Cherokees and Nissan Pathfinders. Walking into the classroom I step upon discarded J. Crew and Lands' End catalogs. As I begin a lecture on Jonathan Edwards I peer into an audience of deep-brown and rose tans acquired in St. Maarten, Bermuda, St. Kitts, or perhaps the Swiss ski slopes. I do not cite these details gratuitously: my students are being educated as much by the consumer culture as by anything I say about Puritanism. Although they are from various American suburban high schools in Shaker Heights, Winnetka, Pacific Palisades, and Scarsdale, they are discovering a common social status in their shared taste for Volvos, alpine sweaters, and Swatch accessories. The cheery confidence with which they speak just barely hides arrogance, underwritten at Educational Testing Services, Princeton, New Jersey. Secure in an upper-class entitlement where privilege elides with merit, they dwell in a security that the revivalists in this valley nearly two hundred years ago could not shake.

They are, as they already realize, being socialized into the world of major brokerages, banks, public-relations firms, corporations, or the most competitive of business schools. Despite the seriousness of these goals, they fol-

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low the path with a certain ease. Schedules and careers are loosely managed, the protocols of academic life having been passed down to them from older friends or siblings, guidance counselors, relatives, parental business contacts, and a whole network of outside sophistication far more influential than the advice of any academic might be. These students move from a world of leisure into the corporate world of work in grooves so sure that their public mention is naive. In an innocent moment a year ago, I asked at a department meeting whether the chairman or her assistants tracked the work lives of the department's students. It was an uncomfortable moment. They, I was firmly told, find work through parental business networks or school connections; things fall into place for our students.

The white upper-class exterior of the college's world, however, belies increasingly disruptive changes in the last decade. The American upper class is now a multi-ethnic meritocratic elite. And my classes include the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Slavic, Irish, Jewish, and Italian immigrants as well as the traditional—but declining—scions of WASP wealth. This student body, however white, is by the school's traditional standards a diverse lot. And the college's pressures for upper-class conformity alienate some of my working-class white and upwardly mobile Asian students who find themselves outside the school's elitist norms. The faculty displays a similar "diversity." I was welcomed to my department by a small group of colleagues who proudly retailed their entrance into what was once a WASP preserve from lower-class Greek, Jewish, German, and Slavic families. They have for the most part adopted the faculty's upper-class academic life-style. Yet professors hired in the last ten years have had to conform to far stricter standards for publication than earlier faculty, who often pursued leisurely lives as gentlemen-teachers.

The school's taken-for-granted social ease is consequently threatened in an increasingly diverse and professional academic world. At one time the year's new faculty cohort, accompanied by its wives, went each Sunday to the home of an older settled and usually tenured professor. There—years before the official checkpoints of third-year review and tenure consideration—new faculty members and their spouses were weighed in the social, political, and intellectual balance of acceptability as prospective members of this community. This procedure has now, of course, been discontinued. Many faculty and their significant others of whatever sex would no longer be acceptable in the houses of older professors who despise their ethnic background and social provenance, not to mention their intellectual, academic, sexual, or institutional politics.

As the college's taken-for-granted rituals of solidarity have eroded, its vaunted world of homogeneous, comfortable society has been displaced to nostalgic symbols whose meaning often escapes the newcomer. The campus is built with granite quarried from pits that provided stone for the oldest and newest buildings on campus. In the first floor of the administration building, the admissions and development officers are dressed in prep-school elegance that disappeared nearly twenty years ago at the places to which their loafers and button-down-collar shirts refer. For a while the year's first convocation carried the weight of the school's Baptist heritage: its promised world of religious community. The college's backward-looking symbolism suggests that more than institutionalized ease has been lost. The chapel's hymns and polished pews seem to represent those internalized moral and spiritual disciplines that the American WASP elite once taught its children in a (relatively) more homogeneous and secure setting. Not surprisingly, a wistful desire for religious community now pervades the school's most conspicuous and popular mass events. Two springs ago one sensed this persisting sensibility in the great spectacle that surrounded the address of Cornel West—and a year before, Jesse Jackson. In the crowds of students pressing for tickets, one felt this new-moneyed elite's deep attraction to the now lost values of a teacherly religious community.

As the place where society reproduces itself, schools teach as much by example as by spoken precepts. Surely my white students' most visible day-to-day object lesson must be

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the marginality of black Americans to the ongoing life of their upper-class world. Although the school's black students are on the high end of test scores for African-American youth, their marks still leave them below the school average. Excluded by the only intellectual criteria that most students acknowledge, the African-American students are widely considered to be interlopers. Huddled at their own tables in the dining hall—increasingly segregated by sex—these black students encounter the central reality of their college lives: their superfluousness to the lives of an increasingly diverse American elite. In its most conspicuous public spaces the school's student body pointedly displays the deepest social inequalities of American society.

This marginal position has to be explained in a school that values community and tolerates increasing ethnic difference among nonblacks. And the explanations, it seems, must be plausible to blacks, whites, and everyone else involved. At my first faculty party, the black studies department was explained to me as the embodiment of the black students' worldview. For some reason, I fell afoul of this apparently shared understanding early on. At the time, the majority of African-American students I encountered were taken up with the Afrocentric study of black religions. And I must—my memory is not clear on this—not have fully approved of some of the extravagant interpretations that I was hearing of Langston Hughes's blues poetry in my African-American literature class. Groups of estranged minorities are often close-knit and sectarian at places such as this. Thereafter, the black students dropped me. And in the leisure afforded by their absence, I had time to write and to work with a series of excellent white students who, perhaps predictably, went on to excellent graduate or professional schools.

For better or worse, my experience has plunged me into the white academic culture of the school. Most of my students, even in the advanced African-American literature seminars, were white. They were often better students of black literature than African Americans because of their self-consciously cultivated ability to detach themselves from a text and to analyze it. They brought to my classes a variant of the white academic culture that gives the school its reputation. They came to Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright without the crippling feelings of alienation, inevitably experienced by an outsider in a closely knit community. They drew upon the first two years' rich study in the humanities and analytical skills of reading, writing, and argument. To be sure, a number were self-conscious liberals, involved in the school's peace studies or ecology theme houses, headed for graduate schools, work in nonprofit organizations, or bohemian life after graduation. Yet things have fallen into place for them too.

THROUGH THE years, I myself drifted from the teaching of African-American studies to courses on Colonial and nineteenth-century American literature or work in literary history. My students and aides tend now to be wholly white and Asian. My recent advanced classes in American literature, literary history, and culture have had no blacks at all. Increasingly my white and Asian students are conservative. At their best, these students are still remarkably adept. In the hard-edged arguments that increasingly fill the school's newspaper and politics, they test ideas, now giving liberal clichés those analytic twists by which the brightest youth always give their due to tradition. At the same time, the white students have a new sense of class identity that I have not seen before. An excellent upper-class white student who is taking a double major in English and political science has told me that she hopes to become a financial vice president in the media—for it is, she asserts, the "money people" who control ideas in America's public life. A few weeks later, two or three white upper-class students in a candid classroom discussion told me that rich youths like themselves will cease to attend the college if it becomes any less white and any more politically correct. By less white and more politically correct, I take them to mean racially "integrated."

As I watched my white students move through the predictable professional tracks, I realized that despite surface appearances, the school's leisurely life—its high valuation of intimate community—has been reproduced in the life of African-American students. Like the

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white students, blacks, too, come here for the school's reputedly cozy community life, although they rarely end up in the fraternities, sororities, and clubs. They, too, come for success—although I suspect that they are served less well than the whites by the institution's casualness in tracking its graduates' work lives. For reasons I have already suggested, most African-American students miss the intellectual culture of the school's mainstream majors, its newspapers, and student-government associations. Instead, they might be said to undergo a countersocialization. They not only exist outside the school's norms, but they often appropriate those norms in ways that only place them further outside.

Eight or nine years ago, a number of African-American students–again, oddly, in the spirit of the college—turned to religion. They cultivated a piety that represented both an intellectual and psychological response to their institutional experience here. A number were drawn to a staff member who taught courses in African-American religion and directed the school's Higher Education Opportunity Program. He was a charismatic figure with a small core of young black men around him. During the summer orientation, he harangued the black students about racial identity and their coming alienation at the college. A number of black students became interested in Afrocentric religion. Some went to graduate school in the liberal arts disciplines and the professions. A few have recently become theologians.

Black students have also cultivated the college's value of "community," although they are often bound by symbols of alienation. On the wall of the African-American cultural center is a picture of the center's late-sixties founders, dressed menacingly in leather coats. The black students are coiffed in shrublike Afros and staring into the camera with hard, intimidating looks designed for a soft, upper-class white man—perhaps a roommate's stockbroker father from Scarsdale—who I am sure will never set foot in this place. A few years ago I noticed that a similar picture appeared in the college yearbook. There a group of anonymous black men clad in the short, heavy-patched jackets then favored by lower-class New York blacks mimed the disjointed finger gestures flaunted by urban gangs. These symbols of intimate grouping and shared understandings are, of course, signs of fraternity. They appear understandably in a school that has a row of white million-dollar fraternity houses down the hill. However, this fraternity cultivates an oppositional stance to values of social mobility at the heart of American elite life. And yet, what are these students here for, if not entrance into that elite?

THE BLACK professors to whom I speak ponder that question. The alienation of black students at white campuses is, as a growing scholarship makes clear, a broad national problem. Let me try now to give this problem a local formulation and definition. Middle-class African Americans in the world of the twenties, thirties, and forties often went to predominantly black colleges. And schools such as Howard, Morehouse, and Fisk self-consciously produced Negro elites who behaved in much the same way as the whites I observe at the college. Despite relatively small resources, Howard and other black colleges continued to provide an overwhelming majority of the black students entering graduate schools in the professions or arts and sciences. In the fifties and sixties, black college students were predictably in the vanguard of a civil rights movement that demanded full participation in the American society and polity. Schools such as Howard, Hampton, Fisk, and Morehouse produced the first generation of black professors in the white academy: Allison Davis, Charles Nichols, John Hope Franklin, John Davis, Martin Kilson, Saunders Redding, Preston Williams, and Kenneth Clark. The rigorous intellectual self-definitions that one encountered in the earlier generation of the black intelligentsia in the sixties and seventies had often been forged at Lincoln, Howard, and Morehouse. The image of the supercilious rich white student at my college is not so different from what my lower-class parents might have disparaged as the arrogant frat boy—headed for law or medical school at Howard University. Although he and his friends would have never used these words, they were involved in the task of elite ego formation.

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The climate of this college encourages black students to see the meaning of their blackness as estrangement from upper-class American life. It is not surprising that African-American students--already marginalized by social class and test scores—would appropriate a deeply consensual image of blackness that appeals to white racist prejudice and youthful black alienation. Conversations with faculty turn upon the convention that African-American students are black in the sense that they are outside of the school's intellectual and cultural world. This understanding of blackness—shared by blacks and whites—justifies the alienation of blacks from the college's cultural centers, and explains what is widely perceived to be unequal levels of academic performance. In the well-heeled achieving society of the college this consensual racism underlies a polite apartheid, a genteel separation between blacks and whites on the grounds of black deficiencies. This segregation not only explains, but also justifies, patterns of African-American student withdrawal, cathartic militancy, or religious absorption.

I HAVE DIRECTED many senior honors theses, but only one has been written by a black senior. I first encountered this woman in my American literature survey class. Her very presence meant that she paid little attention to the black diatribe against my courses. She wore the striped knit caps that were common to the West Indian cultural nationalists in the college at the time. But her resemblance to them ended there. For when she opened her mouth to comment on Cotton Mather, Jonathan Edwards, or Ralph Waldo Emerson, she spoke in the high analytic mode that one expects from a senior philosophy major in a more intellectually self-conscious environment than obtains in this school. She may have been a first-year student, but her literary insights and analytic prowess stunned not only me but also the white fraternity boys whose baseball-capped heads jerked back and forth as they took in her points. Later, in a course on the origins of the American novel, I found her to be as brilliant and dialectical as ever.

This woman wrote a senior thesis with me in English as well as a senior honors paper in African-American studies. I attended both defenses. Her English thesis was a study of literary genre in the slave narrative. Her African-American studies paper concerned her experience as a black Caribbean student at the college. An important part of her paper argued that black students at the college decided for themselves whether or not to follow informal practices associated at the institution with blackness. At a critical point in the defense, she argued that she did not see herself as black, and attributed her academic success partially to this view.

The examining group was not altogether surprised at her argument for a number of reasons. This is the kind of high intellectual play that the faculty wants from its best students—the ability to set forth and extend a provocative statement of one's point of view. Notions of the social construction of race are now legion in the social sciences and humanities, and her paper seemed to be exactly the highly reflective use of this concept that one might want from a bright student. There is also a growing academic literature, both ethnographic and quantitative, that suggests that black students make precisely this kind of choice in many of the nation's lower-class predominantly urban high schools. And again the paper seemed to be engaged with this literature in not only an analytic but also an introspective way.

In her intellectual excellence and her quirky individualism, this student represented a very impressive protest against the college's debilitating ideology of blackness. And part of her paper's power stemmed from the fact that it clarified an important trend. The school's most successful black students explicitly reject the consensual black ideology and its discourse of de facto segregation. They—regardless of actual American citizenship—tend overwhelmingly to identify themselves as Caribbean. With African students, too—despite their relatively small numbers—they seem to have the ability to ward off the most debilitating effects of the black countersocialization. Most of the black students I encounter speak of themselves as Jamaican, Barbadian, or Guyanese. Only when pressed do they admit that they are second-,

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third-, or even, in some cases, fourth-generation West Indian. I remark to a black colleague that it is apparently a difficult thing to be African-American in this college. He nods and laughs.

I suspect that those students who identify with real or attenuated West Indian choices are seeking a path out of the social, political, and cultural cul de sac that African-American blackness represents at the college. They do this whatever the larger trends in the American society as a whole—a society from which this albeit diverse elite increasingly isolates itself for the tasks of social reproduction. The West Indian students have established their own student organizations. I see only a small group of West Indian, African, and perhaps a few Asian students when I exit the library at eleven and twelve at night. They are nowhere to be seen with the clumps of trysting, flirting white students and African-American athletes. White professors I know inevitably come up with the names of African and West Indian students when challenged to produce examples of black success. So pervasive is the mystique of upper-class whiteness in the campus that I wonder whether they themselves distinguish the West Indians from the African Americans who came from such a different ambience.

IT IS CLEAR from this essay that I am not much of a role model. Where, I sometimes wonder, could I model necessary strengths in an acceptable way to the black American students who are ultimately my people and my children? That is one way to think of the issue. I could also pose another. Although we can define sickness, it is far harder to define health. To the best black students, I can say that intellectual rigor is the same in all places. African-American intellectuals have always resisted this country's consensual definitions of blackness in order to discover a mastery that is the same in all academic places and for all people. Intellectuals are not governed by the racial codes of social cliques, but by the language of the great texts.

No one can give African-American students a rationale for cosmopolitan intellectual life that is not deeply painful—possessed of no reward beyond its own intrinsic satisfactions. The most conspicuous fruit of the college's integrated life is informal segregation, all the more insidious for its tacit ideology of race. This is another way of saying that this school cannot produce the kind of elite for black America that it produces for white America. It is thus no surprise that intellectual excellence is the only resistance to this racism, which now thrives in the integrated world. ●

PHILLIP M. RICHARDS was a Fellow at the Institute on Race and Social Division and a visiting associate professor in the English department of Boston University during the academic year 1997–1998.

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The Culture of Celebrity

Todd Gitlin

A FEW YEARS AGO I visited the champagne cellar of Piper-Heidsieck in Reims, a city in eastern France. At the entrance there is a plaque proclaiming that the cellar had been dedicated by Marie Antoinette. At the end of the tour, one steps into a small museum consisting entirely of photographs of famous people drinking champagne. And who are these worthies? Are they perhaps members of today's royal houses? Presidents or prime ministers of great nations? Economic titans? Nobel Prize winners? Of course not. They are movie stars, and almost all of them are American—Marilyn Monroe to Clint Eastwood. The premise of the exhibit is unmistakable: Hollywood stars are the royalty of this century. Celebrity is what the global village has in common, to gossip about. Doomed Marie should only have dreamed of such popularity.

To single out a few human beings for special attention is nothing new. Other societies have held up for admiration, emulation, and fear the likenesses of exemplary shamans, priests, generals, kings, saints, and political leaders. But during the last two centuries, a special status has been reserved for those who embody glamour—a distinct power to inspire awe, amplified by love or hate, and thereby to fill up cultural time and space. This cultural power is secular, distinct from any power to kill, to tax, or to enslave. It borrows its force from the realm of the spirit. It works on emotions. It is experienced as a force with visible and tangible dimensions—thus do we speak of stars, possessed of the bright light.

To speak of a culture of celebrity nowadays is nearly to commit a redundancy. News is, increasingly, anything that happens to newsworthy people. All the culture industries, including news, capitalize on the star power that binds fans to their celebrities. The stars are, in their different ways, incarnations of some mysterious quality that makes their every activity a matter of interest at least, fascination at most. Whatever "it" is, the stars are those who have it. But they have it because fans have given or lent it.

The dialectic of stardom and fandom is not exactly new. As Leo Braudy argued in a superb book, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History*, it was the eighteenth century that ushered in "an audience that, instead of passively responding to its idols, takes an active role in defining them. . . ." Ever since then, the institution of stardom has held on to this dialectic of stardom and fandom. Stars touch some photosensitive areas in the multitude and strive to manage that multitude, while intermediate institutions spring up to keep the relationship dynamic—impresarios, celebrity magazines and biographies, ballads. In their various ways, Samuel Johnson, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Jenny Lind, Tom Thumb, Charles Dickens, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Oscar Wilde, and Enrico Caruso were stars in the contemporary sense. Their audiences did not know—perhaps did not aspire to know—what they ate for breakfast, or even, to the current degree, with whom. But the fans felt ennobled by what they knew, or thought they knew, of the stars. Fans, short for fanatics, named children after their heroes. They were wannabes, dressing up to type. They flocked to make personal contact, where possible. There were, and are, elements of ecstasy—literally, coming out of oneself—in the relationship. In some sense, fans find themselves in the starlight, by stepping out of themselves. They seek a laying on of hands and gifts, tokens of starlight.

But one should not simplify the bonds that

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tie people to their celebrities. There is admiration in varying degrees and intensities, and, at the high end, love and surrender—a love of surrender, in fact. Yet in the contemporary era, when celebrities are not only relatively accessible but often not conspicuously more talented than their admirers, envy is also in play. The fans who mob the star are not only transfixed in a state of admiration, they are also committing aggression—a punishment for the star's superior power, and a consequence of the fans' unacknowledged envy. The fan hopes to walk away with traces of the magic—autographs, locks of hair, smudges left by fragments of the True Presence. (I once heard Jane Fonda joke about saving her toenails for the benefit of adoring fans.) "I'm not going to wash my hand for a week" is a fan's tribute to that presence, yet at the same time an acknowledgment of its transitory quality, since if the presence were ineradicable, washing would scarcely threaten it.

Braudy goes on to say that the audience that is intimately involved in defining its idols is "an audience that is willing to be manipulated but eager to convey how that ought to be done more expertly." We are not only enamored of celebrities, but fascinated by the means by which they become and remain celebrated. We are curious to know how they fabricate their images. We like to see the curtain rise on the Wizard of Oz manipulating his machine. At least we like it up to a point.

THE DIFFUSION of celebrity can bite back on the diffused celebrity. Those who live in the spotlight can die in the spotlight. Consider the *Jenny Jones Show* guest who revealed that he was in love with another man, who then, in a homophobic panic, shot him to death. Another peculiar thing about the age of diffuse celebrity is exhibited by Paula Jones, who claimed in court that President Clinton's alleged come-on had, among other things, damaged her reputation. The irony, of course, is that, as an uncelebrated person, she had little reputation to start with. It was only in the course of going to court that she established a reputation: heroine-victim in the eyes of the right, spoiler-bitch for Clinton supporters.

Celebrity has some striking new features in the age of entertainment glut. For one thing, stars are familiar. There are so many of them. Stardom has been banalized, in a way. Superstars feel amused by the very condition of celebrity. There is a world of difference between the movie star who revels in glamour (an institution by no means dead, as we see in the run-up to every year's Academy Awards) and the rock star who mocks stardom by camping it up or muting it but—wonderful paradox—doing so in public. The old-style star is self-reverent in the face of her power to transfix. When she goes out in public, she switches on her performing self. The new-style star winks at her own performance and sends out cues that she is far too hip to be revered (and, because she knows this, deserves respect for her honesty). The photographer Annie Leibovitz excels at getting celebrities to relinquish their personae—if only for a moment. For *Rolling Stone*, for example, she shot the five members of the rock group Fleetwood Mac clowning around in bed. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers would not have posed that way, nor would the Andrews Sisters.

This distinction holds in politics as well. John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan (they were of the same generation, astoundingly enough) were old-style. They guarded their secrets; in public, at least, they were never "off." Bill Clinton is new-style. On television, he answered a young person's question about the kind of underpants he wears. The celebrity and the audience collaborate in this faux intimacy. The way is clear for the false, but famous, report of a semen-stained dress.

With the encouragement of photographers, stars frequently step aside from their glamour and comment (often ironically) on it. The sixties ushered in a glamour of antiglamour, and it is still with us. In 1974, not long after the general mass-circulation magazines—*Life*, *Collier's*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*—folded, Time Inc. began to publish *People*, where stars bled into humdrum celebrities, or flavors of the week (a term that became current to acknowledge, and mock, the proliferation of novelty personalities). But the world of rock music is where we see antiglamour arise most conspicuously. The 1989 coffee-table

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book *Rolling Stone: The Photographs* depicted a wasted Keith Richards, a fetally coiled John Lennon in Yoko Ono's arms, Tracy Chapman with her head slumped on her folded arms. Many of the photos showed icons simultaneously mocking and indulging their icon status—thus Brian Wilson as a berobed prophet on the beach, surfboard under his arm.

The media today throw open the sluices of celebrity, offering cameo parts to the multitudes—appearances on the tabloid talk-and-squawk shows. Prestige and its shadow twin, notoriety, accrue to those whose existence is magnified in the form of media images and names. What the on-screen presence said may not be remembered, but the fact that one appeared before the camera is memorable.

So many Americans have been depicted in the unending torrent of media images that it is easy, but false, to assume that celebrity has been equalized—that we are already living in that onrushing future of which Andy Warhol famously spoke: "In the future, everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes." Warhol's apothegm perfectly expresses the faux populism of our era. Warhol himself has been famous for far more than his fifteen minutes, much more than fifteen years, in fact, and who would bet against the longevity of his reputation? A certain kind of fame has been banalized, downgraded to middling status, and something else has been elevated above it: megafame, gigafame, the real thing. In the world of *People* magazine, we have celebrities galore, but above the celebrities, glorying in their transcendent light, the stars still shine.

In the realm of public performance, the meltdown of boundaries between politics and celebrity is virtually complete. April 1998's White House Correspondents Association dinner included—one wants to say "featured"—Michael Douglas, Sharon Stone, and Warren Beatty along with President and Mrs. Clinton (and on the other side of the room, Paula Jones, who had said for legal purposes that the very sight of the president upset her beyond words). At such spectacular moments, politics and entertainment, never as distinct as purists imagine, converge under the sign of celebrity. This is evident in the world of *People* and on newsmagazine covers. *Time* celebrated its consolidation of politics and celebrity in a March 3 cavalcade of self-celebration at Radio City Music Hall on its seventy-fifth anniversary. Here were seated Mikhail Gorbachev between Sophia Loren and Kevin Costner, Joe DiMaggio beside Henry Kissinger, Ted Kennedy beside Muhammad Ali, Tom Cruise beside Walter Cronkite. Leni Riefenstahl was there; so was Louis Farrakhan. (A historic opportunity was missed when these two weren't seated together to compare notes on million-man marches.) Imelda Marcos canceled at the last minute. Bill Bradley toasted the Rev. Billy Graham, Sharon Stone toasted Betty Friedan, Tom Hanks toasted John Glenn. Had *Time*'s staff a sense of humor, they could have seated accused Air Force adulterer Kelly Flinn with Dick Morris, Anita Hill with George Wallace, Donna Rice with William Ginsburg. According to *Time* president Bruce Hallett, "What better way to celebrate every *Time* than to honor the men and women who have enlivened our pages with their valuable contributions in this century." Obviously, celebrity need not be admirable, merely spectacular. Hitler made seven covers of *Time*; Stalin, twelve. In the realm of celebrity, the fallen share center stage with the glorious, the evil with the good. The emotional glue that binds us to those we love to hate is not unrelated to the glue that binds us to those we love to love. The celebrity-making machinery capitalizes on this, and dissolves values in an acid bath of fame. ●

Todd Gitlin is the author of *The Twilight of Common Dreams, The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, and a novel to be published next year, *Sacrifice*.

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The Challenge to Tenure

Dennis Wrong

In his essay "Tenure Trouble" (*Dissent*, Winter 1998), Jon Wiener presents much too narrow a view of the rising opposition to academic tenure, its rationale, and causes. Following Wiener's precedent, let me disclose that I was a tenured faculty member for over thirty years at three private universities—Brown, the New School for Social Research, and New York University. Although currently retired, I still teach as an adjunct. I served on NYU's promotion and tenure committee for the arts and sciences faculty in the 1980s.

Wiener is certainly right that the cost-benefit concerns of university administrations and boards of trustees have led them to trim faculty salaries by reducing the proportions of tenured and even so-called tenure-track faculty, who can be replaced by adjunct, part-time, and nontenured full-time teachers at considerably less expense. Trustees and elected state legislators with control over the budgets of public institutions are often conservative Republicans anxious to reduce government spending. In addition, the academic versions of the "culture wars" have identified arts faculties, especially at elite universities, with a trendy liberal-leftism centered on "identity politics" and "political correctness" perceived as institutionalizing the outlook and slogans of the student radicalism of the sixties. A *New York Times* article by William H. Honan, "The Ivory Tower Under Siege" (December 28, 1997), fully documents a campaign across the country by trustees and politicians to impose heavier teaching loads and stricter standards for tenuring and granting paid sabbaticals on university faculties.

Yet other considerations that Wiener never mentions influence the challenge to tenure as it has evolved over the past several decades. The most obvious one is the abolition of mandatory retirement. An institution's commitment to tenure may now cover as much as fifty years rather than roughly thirty years as in the past; moreover, the added years are when salaries for senior faculty are at their highest. The evidence for the few years since compulsory retirement was abolished is that a majority of faculty are still retiring (as I myself did) at seventy, the age limit set by previous legislation, although sixty-five and sixty-eight were not uncommon before the 1960s. Voluntary retirement at seventy was, however, not anticipated and its persistence cannot be counted on to keep budgets down.

Denial of tenure has also become fraught with risks of litigation. There is even a law firm that advertises in *Lingua Franca* its availability to plaintiffs in such cases. Small wonder that colleges and universities find ways to avoid the whole tenure issue by increasing non-tenure-track appointments. It is also worth noting that for some time now universities have preferred to hire junior faculty directly out of graduate school because hiring people who already have teaching experience at other institutions means that they have to be considered for tenure within a shorter period under the regulations of the American Association of University Professors, violation of which leads to censure by the organization. The current tight academic job market also means that a person denied tenure at one institution has difficulty finding a tenured or tenure-track position at another. Accordingly, more and more people denied tenure embark on alternative careers, which enhances the value of tenure and willingness to sue when it is denied. A result is that many people prefer underpaid and even part-time non-tenure-track positions to tenure-track positions

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where eventual tenure is doubtful—while they do scholarly or scientific work that they hope will ultimately increase their chances for tenure somewhere. This contributes to the expansion of the academic reserve army of the semi-employed and to the passivity of its members about their low pay and poor work conditions. Presumably, the oversupply of Ph.Ds will correct itself in time as the scarcity of jobs and limited chances for tenure become more evident.

The reduction in federal funding has also added to the fiscal problems facing universities. If "the bottom-line is budgetary," as Wiener contends, this is also true for the consumers of higher education: the students and their families. For young couples who are modestly well-off but not rich, the prospective cost of college education, even for children as yet unborn, has become their major concern in planning for the future. That cost increased by half over the past decade for public four-year institutions and by a third for private colleges (I take these figures from Honan). Costs, especially for the latter, had increased by even larger percentages in the seventies and early eighties. There is evidence that the increases have leveled off in the past few years, but this has yet to influence the attitudes of trustees, administrators, consumers, or Republican congressional representatives, who have created a commission to investigate the rising costs of higher education and to suggest remedies, which will surely include modification of tenure. Increased competition of colleges and universities for smaller birth cohorts of students has already led some institutions to demand that their tenured faculty engage in advertising and public relations activities, such as speaking at high schools and fraternal associations. In light of the inveterate anti-elitism of the American public, it is hardly surprising that a growing segment of it wonders whether the beneficiaries of a lifetime job security unavailable to anyone else truly deserve it.

Wiener's sarcasm regarding a tenured professor opposed to tenure is unjustified. Not a few professors have come to doubt whether tenure should be maintained in its present form. Some individuals, including the chair of the Columbia University astronomy department, have refused tenure on principle while continuing to teach on short-term contracts. Former Stanford University president Donald Kennedy, a biologist, has written that "in many places, especially the large research universities, tenure may slowly be dying of natural causes." Philip Altbach, an authority on higher education everywhere, thinks the "golden age" of academia is over throughout the industrialized world and that fewer people will receive tenure. Arthur Levine, president of Columbia Teachers College, thinks that "higher education will be forced to create a variety of appointment alternatives to allow older faculty to move from full-time to part-time status, rather than directly into retirement." These men are simply acknowledging social and economic conditions restricting tenure that are unlikely to go away. But critics of the professoriate for sloth, arrogance, hypocrisy, bad teaching, exploitation of students (including sexual harassment), and ideological special pleading have not all been from outside the university nor rancorously right-wing in their politics. *Poisoning the Ivy* by Michael Lewis, a sociologist at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, recounts the "seven deadly sins and other vices of higher education in America" (his subtitle) and estimates that about 30 percent of tenured faculty are guilty of the "misfeasance and malfeasance" he reports. In addition to my own review in the *Times Literary Supplement* (January 23), I have seen only one review of this book, by Ivar Berg, a former dean at both Columbia and the University of Pennsylvania, in *Contemporary Sociology*. Both of us complain of Lewis's exaggerations (Berg cuts his 30 percent in half) and purple rhetoric, but agree that he documents real abuses and their "structural" causes, making the academy vulnerable to the ruthless cost-benefit reforms of outsiders.

FINALLY, we come to academic freedom, the first and usually the last justification for tenure. If there are good reasons and powerful "social forces" restricting tenure and limiting the number who receive it, it seems to me not beyond the bounds of invention to find alternative ways of protecting faculty against being fired for expressing opinions offensive to

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some organized group. Wiener alludes to this possibility, but dismisses it much too lightly. Is a guarantee of lifetime employment really the *only* way to protect unbounded free speech or legal off-campus political activity? Criminal offenses or acts evincing a more vaguely defined "moral turpitude" have always been grounds for dismissing tenured faculty—one wonders why Wiener even bothers to mention such cases. With respect to unpopular speech, Lewis writes: "No board of trustees is likely to risk the ignominious accusation of McCarthyism by reversing a personnel recommendation of the faculty and administration unless it is virtually forced to do so." Does Wiener really doubt this? His examples of the risks to which right-wingers are exposed are not very convincing. In both the cases he cites, clearly so for Thomas Reeves confronting the "intolerant liberals [who] dominate academia," objections were likely to be raised by the professors' own departments, supporting Lewis's complaint that ultimate authority now resides at the departmental level where conformism and mutual backscratching are often the rule.

Wiener mentions that "tenured professors at the University of California, and most other universities, face reviews of their performance every two or three years; each must show excellence in teaching, research, and university service; those who don't are subject to demotion or other penalties." I am pleased to learn that these rules exist at UC, but am doubtful about "most other universities." Such "penalties" as frozen salaries and "terminal" associate professorships are common enough, but I have never heard of anyone being demoted in rank. Nor are professors penalized with salary reductions for indifferent academic performance, unlike professional athletes. Donald Kennedy reports that rules for dismissal for inactivity and incompetence exist at Stanford but "do not really provide secure grounds for firing a professor." He goes on to observe that "the public perception that tenure protects 'deadwood' is, alas, correct." Actually, some of the rules for review and penalties that Wiener says are in force at UC are not very different from suggestions for reforming tenure advanced by many of its critics, the major difference, presumably, being that Wiener would not countenance dismissal even for persistently negative evaluations of performance.

Wiener closes by advocating unions and collective bargaining for "college teachers." Perhaps I should disclose at this point that I voted in three National Labor Relations Board elections at NYU in the 1970s. I voted for the American Association of University Professors as the bargaining agent in a first election, but after its elimination I voted with majorities for "no union" in two subsequent elections. I feared that a conventional union would simply cast a protective mantle over the featherbedding, boondoggling, and "protection of the inept" (in William J. Goode's choice phrase) that have recently fueled the protests of critics of tenure like Michael Lewis. The unionization issue at NYU and most other private institutions became moot in the late 1970s as a result of the Supreme Court's *Yeshiva* decision, ruling that no meaningful line could be drawn between "management" and "labor" in most universities. Perhaps Wiener has in mind a union that would represent only nontenured faculty, as some have advocated, but he doesn't say so, and his article is mainly about tenure. His failure to mention the *Yeshiva* decision is as grave an omission as his neglect of the abolition of mandatory retirement.

DENNIS WRONG's *The Modern Condition: Essays at Century's End* has just been published by Stanford University Press.

Jon Wiener Replies

DENNIS WRONG presents a laundry list of arguments that have been brought up by critics of tenure. He seems to favor replacing tenure with a more market-driven system that would get rid of all those incompetents in our midst. At a time when the logic of the market is spreading with unprecedented speed, when job insecurity is a fact of life for everyone from service workers to corporate executives, it's hard to argue that

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anybody should have more protection for his or her job, rather than less. Don't we all recognize the logic of the bottom line: why should anybody be exempt? Dennis Wrong can't think of a reason.

The university is valuable in part because it is one of the few institutions today that is not completely market driven, because it supports and nurtures independent thought that might seem unproductive or useless to the mainstream—the kind of work Dennis Wrong had done for the last thirty years.

Wrong's one positive recommendation to protect academic freedom in a world without tenure is to establish "legal protection of faculty against being fired for expressing opinions offensive to some organized group." But that's hardly the only thing academic freedom protects: what about faculty fired for criticizing the dean? or for not giving a good grade to the star quarterback? or for teaching courses with low enrollments? What about faculty members fired because the dean wants to give their jobs to his relatives?

Presumably Wrong favors a system in which a peer-review panel would hear complaints of violations of academic freedom. My article criticized that kind of proposal, and tried to imagine how such a system might work: fired professors would exercise their right to appear before a review panel to state their belief that their teaching and research had been good, and that the reason they hadn't been renewed was illegitimate. The university lawyers would respond that the school's development plan calls for downsizing in their fields; besides, the former professors' teaching wasn't outstanding, and their research lacked sufficient distinction. Competent people could be hired at lower salaries. Few petitioners are going to be able to refute arguments like these—especially when review panels would consist of other untenured faculty members who themselves would have to worry about whether they would be reappointed if they displeased the administration.

Wrong is right that deadwood is a problem in the university. But eliminating tenure is not likely to bring higher intellectual standards. Those most vulnerable to firing are those who teach classes with low enrollments—poetry, classics, medieval history—and those who irritate deans and department chairs by disagreeing with them. If the university abandons tenure for a more market-driven system, the faculty who survive will be those who teach big, popular courses and who ingratiate themselves with the administration—along with a few well-known superstars. The solution to the problem of deadwood is not to abolish tenure, but rather to strengthen the review process so that everyone is reviewed every two or three years. Of course incompetence should be grounds for dismissal.

Wrong criticizes me for arguing that, in the absence of a tenure system, unionization provides the only hope for college teachers in a market-driven economy. The Supreme Court's 1980 *Yeshiva* decision makes faculty unions "moot," he says. But the *Yeshiva* decision didn't prohibit faculty unions; it denied National Labor Relations Board protection to teachers at private colleges. They can still organize and seek to negotiate a union contract. And the tens of thousands of college teachers who work in public community colleges aren't covered by the *Yeshiva* decision.

But Wrong is against unions for college teachers. He says unions provide "protection for the inept." The *Wall Street Journal* editorial page says things like that practically every day, but it's hard to believe that argument will find much support among readers of *Dissent*. ●

JON WIENER teaches history at the University of California, Irvine, and is a contributing editor of the *Nation*.

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So Long, Jerry Seinfeld

Nicolaus Mills

In recent years the last episodes of certain long-running sitcoms have become a major cultural events in American life. Record numbers of us turn on our television sets to watch what is going to happen to people who have been part of our lives for a decade or more. It doesn't matter that the people we are worrying over were invented by a team of writers and then market tested before we got to know them. Like the characters in a serialized Victorian novel, they're people we've grown attached to. Often they have been more revealing of themselves than friends or family.

The end of the *Seinfeld* show this May, like the much-watched endings five and fifteen years ago of *Cheers* and *M*A*S*H*, turned out to be another television milestone, drawing an estimated seventy-six million viewers as well as a tribute from Vice President Al Gore, who, during his commencement speech at New York University, observed, "Today marks the end of a significant episode, a day when you say goodbye to a strange assortment of people who have somehow become close friends. Yes, it's truly special to be here in New York—for the end of *Seinfeld*."

The seventy-five-minute final episode of *Seinfeld* was as outwardly unsentimental as it could be. It revolved around Jerry and his friends being sentenced to "a year removed from society" when they violate the Good Samaritan law of Latham, Massachusetts, by doing nothing to prevent a carjacking they witness. What undoes the New York Four, as they are quickly labeled by the media, is not, however, their inaction in Latham (a town they land in when their NBC corporate jet is forced into an emergency landing) but the parade of character witnesses, all figures from previous *Seinfeld* shows, who testify to being abused by them. For the Latham jury and judge, the evidence of "mocking and maligning" is overwhelming, and as they go off to prison, Jerry and his friends realize the impossibility of mounting a credible defense of themselves to strangers. The last time we see them together, they are as caught up in their own world as ever. Elaine is worried that she will have to wear an unflattering orange uniform in prison, and in the show's final scene we see Jerry, dressed in an unflattering orange uniform, doing stand-up comedy, breaking up George and Kramer—but not his fellow inmates—with a routine in which he asks, "What's with lockdown? Aren't weight lifting and sodomy enough?"

For NBC and its parent company, General Electric, the loss of *Seinfeld* was particularly hard to take. After nine seasons *Seinfeld* had built up an audience of thirty million weekly viewers and helped make NBC the number-one television network. Although reruns of the nearly two hundred *Seinfeld* episodes are expected to generate as much as $1.6 billion in the coming years, *Seinfeld* was bringing NBC more than two hundred million dollars in profits annually and drawing in the most desirable demographic group in the country, eighteen- to forty-nine-year-olds.

NBC, which had already been paying record sums for *Seinfeld*—supporting cast members received six hundred thousand dollars per show—offered Seinfeld five million dollars an episode if he would stay another year, and when that didn't work, the network consoled itself by charging advertisers up to two million dollars per thirty-second commercial for the final episode.

For *Seinfeld* fans, the end of the show was equally tough to take. Since the 1970s the most popular sitcoms have tended to gener-

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ate spin-offs, based on a supporting character starting a television life of his or her own. *Mary Tyler Moore* begat *Rhoda* and *Lou Grant*. *All in the Family* begat *Maude*, and *Cheers* begat the current hit *Frasier*. But *Seinfeld*, like Jerry himself, has turned out to be childless. The world of its four principals—Jerry, his ex-girlfriend Elaine, his neighbor Kramer, and his high school pal George—has seemed too self-defining to imagine that any single *Seinfeld* character could hold an audience without the others.

WHAT *SEINFELD* stood for and exactly why he will be missed is, however, another matter. "No hugging, no learning," was the television motto of *Seinfeld* co-creator Larry David, and often it was a motto that seemed brutally true. Since the end of the traditional family sitcoms of the 1950s and 1960s, the most successful sitcoms have depended on having a moral edge, instead of sentimentality, to define them. With *Mary Tyler Moore* the moral edge came from a feminism that said women can have it all. With *All in the Family* the edge came from its consistent assault on racial bigotry. Even the early *Roseanne* held off getting cheap laughs to drive home the point that American prosperity wasn't all it was cracked up to be if you came from a working-class family and had only a high school education.

Seinfeld, by contrast, had no such clear-cut moral edge. Originally called the *Seinfeld Chronicles*, the show at first struck viewers as cold. Jerry and his friends were seen as unsympathetic urbanites, and although the show soon improved in the ratings, it never really changed character. It wasn't simply that few blacks or Hispanics appeared on the show. Hardly anybody outside Jerry's New York orbit was ever more than a bit player. Children were virtually nonexistent. Parents were out-of-touch nuisances, and the usual obligations of career were rarely taken seriously. Kramer never seemed to work. George lost job after job. Elaine always fought with her bosses. And Jerry treated his work as a stand-up comedian simply as an easy way to make a buck. Closer to being fortysomethings than thirtysomethings, the characters of *Seinfeld* sent out the message that in order to be happy you don't have to outgrow adolescence; you only have to find others who will share your arrested development.

The absence of a clear-cut moral edge to *Seinfeld* was, however, both deceptive and the show's great strength. Although *Seinfeld* continually claimed it was about nothing, even doing a show, "The Pilot," in which Jerry and George submit a proposal to NBC about a sitcom built around four friends who do nothing, there was nothing vapid about the show's intentions. The modesty of Jerry Seinfeld and his writers was no more to be taken at face value than the modesty of Mark Twain at the start of *Huckleberry Finn*, when he warns his readers, "Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot."

WHAT LAY at the center of *Seinfeld* and made it the leading sitcom of the nineties was the delight it took in attacking political correctness. *Seinfeld*'s writers were fearless in a way that few in academic life have been. There was no way to predict, as there has been with the political right over the last decade, the manners or values they would target. At every chance it got, *Seinfeld* went out of its way to ridicule what was supposedly exempt from ridicule, then refused to undermine its assault with a wink or a qualification that would demonstrate the show had its heart in the right place. Viewers were never given a chance to get sentimental about *Seinfeld* or to doubt that Jerry and his friends believed that nineties civility was pure contrivance. One got to be a fan of *Seinfeld* by coming to terms with the sensibility that prompted Jerry to express his admiration for Elaine by declaring, "She enjoys teasing animals, Ban-Lon, and seeing people run for their lives."

The success of *Seinfeld*'s war on political correctness depended heavily on scripts that ran as many as seventy pages per half hour, twenty pages longer than the usual show. In its dependence on dialogue *Seinfeld* was in many ways closer to the radio comedy of Jack Benny and Fred Allen than that of television.

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In the early shows the self-consciousness of what *Seinfeld* was about was reflected in the stand-up monologues viewers saw Jerry doing in clubs. The material in the monologues involved the use of material in the show, and thus one got two versions, one usually more ironic than the other, of the same incident.

But as *Seinfeld* grew in popularity, Jerry's opening and closing monologues were cut, and viewers were left on their own to see how Jerry's observational comedy stemmed from his belief that in our daily lives political correctness can only kill joy and complexity. How demanding the anti–political-correctness test could be on *Seinfeld* was epitomized by the famous *Schindler's List* episode. It begins with Jerry's parents, who are visiting him in New York, returning early to his apartment and surprising him and his girlfriend kissing. They offer to leave and go to a hotel, but Jerry, like a good son, insists that they stay. Days later, he and his girlfriend find themselves so frustrated that in the middle of watching *Schindler's List* they start making out in the theater.

At a time when the United States was doing nothing about the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Elie Wiesel, at the dedication of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, publicly reminded the president that one couldn't meaningfully say "Never again" and then ignore ongoing genocide, it would have been easy for *Seinfeld* to explain Jerry's action in a way that scored political points. But nothing like that happens. A gossipy friend sees Jerry and his girlfriend necking and reports on what they were doing, and Jerry spends the rest of the program apologizing, getting laughs by trying to explain how his sexual desire got the best of his social conscience.

The risks *Seinfeld* took with *Schindler's List* were more daring than those it usually chanced, but they were not out of character. "The Cigar Store Indian" revolved around Jerry buying a wooden Indian as a gift while dating a Native American. "The Jimmy" centered on Kramer's being honored as a mentally challenged person who was coping well when in fact he had been thrown for a loop after his dentist gave him too much anesthesia. And "The Apology" got its laughs by focusing on a friend of George's who becomes a complete tyrant while on a twelve-step recovery program. By its final season, *Seinfeld* even took on the homeless with a show in which Kramer imports a rickshaw from Hong Kong, then rationalizes his desire to get a homeless person to pull it around for a few dollars an hour with the observation, "They're always walking around the city. Why not strap something on them?"

Even more blatant were *Seinfeld*'s attacks on PC sexual thinking. Jerry had no qualms about not playing by the sexual rules of the nineties: dropping women for the slightest "fault"—big hands, a habit of completing his sentences, and, in one case, breasts so perfect (those of actress Teri Hatcher), that he assumes, incorrectly, that they had to be surgically enhanced. In the age of safe sex Jerry never worried about getting to know someone in depth before trying to sleep with her. One of the classic *Seinfeld* shows, "The Junior Mint," is based on his dating a woman whose name he can't remember, except that it rhymes with a female body part. It doesn't occur to Jerry that there might be something wrong with such a relationship. Instead, he spends the show trying to come up with a name (Mulva, Aretha, Gipple are the best he can do) that will allow him to go out with the anonymous woman (Delores) without revealing how inattentive to her he has been.

Equally important, *Seinfeld* never attempted to escape the charge that it was guilty of misanthropy by periodically suggesting the value of doing the right thing. Time and again, Jerry and his friends found that no good deed goes unpunished. When Jerry and George visit a child who, because of health problems, lives in a bubble, they find a kid who is a perfect monster. He asks George's girlfriend to pull her top down so he can see her breasts, and he starts a fight with George over a game of Trivial Pursuit. When Kramer befriends a man who is a midget, he angers the midget, who initiates a fight in which Kramer has more than he can handle. And when Jerry dates a hearing-impaired woman (and tries to be sensitive), he finds that she and her friends have great fun mocking him in sign language.

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As *Seinfeld* entered its final season, the question for the show was where it could take its humor without going so far over the top that it became pure put-on. In sliding between assaults on political correctness and a comedy of manners, *Seinfeld* was always in danger of spinning out of control. At its best, however, it stayed on course, kept its irony clear. Whether it was the Philip Roth–like jokes about sexual taboos in "The Contest," in which Jerry, George, Kramer, and Elaine make a bet to see who can go the longest without masturbating (Elaine, the predicted winner, is the second one out), or the satire on male bonding that occurs in "The Boyfriend," when Jerry becomes friends with baseball great Keith Hernandez, then turns jealous after he finds Hernandez is attracted to Elaine, there was no mistaking the thrust of *Seinfeld*'s humor in its early years.

But the longer *Seinfeld* went on, the harder it got to keep its humor both fresh and within bounds. To get rid of George's fiancée, whom he didn't want to marry, the writers had her die of poisoning from the glue on the cheap wedding invitations George bought. To show the tyranny restaurants have in New York, they invented a despotic chef known as the "Soup Nazi," and to deal with men's fears of aging, they had Kramer invent a male bra, alternately known as the Bro or Manssier.

Such stretches reflect the difficulty of writing nine years of sitcoms, but they also demonstrate how *Seinfeld*'s insistence on not linking its trademark assault on political correctness to any larger social vision limited its comedic possibilities. *Seinfeld* could jar us and expose the contradictions behind so many nineties beliefs. That, however, was the best it could do. The political correctness that Jerry and his friends had such a delicious time satirizing at the start of the nineties has become everyone's favorite target at decade's end. These days, being anti-PC isn't merely fashionable. It's predictable, a part of our television culture.

David Letterman and Jay Leno wouldn't be caught dead being anything other than anti-PC, and every night on ABC, following Ted Koppel's *Nightline*, it is possible to watch *Politically Incorrect*, a tongue-in-cheek talk show that specializes in getting entertainers and political pundits to make fun of the day's news. Most important, as the public's reaction to the Clinton scandals demonstrates, we have entered the era of postmoral politics. We are prepared to talk about what is in our self-interest, but there is not a whole lot, especially when it comes to our private lives, on which we are prepared to act with the sanctimoniousness that provided the grist for *Seinfeld*'s most original comedy. ●

Nicolaus Mills's most recent book is *The Triumph of Meanness: America's War Against Its Better Self.*

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The Acquisitive Society

Stefan Collini

THE NAME OF R.H. Tawney still evokes the heroic phase of socialism. His work is associated with the belief in equality and fellowship, with the commitment to strive for the creation of a just social order to replace capitalism, and with the obligation of the educated and the privileged to put their talents at the service of the working class. (It is, of course, one sign that the heroic phase of socialism is over that few of the terms in this sentence can now be used confidently and without qualification.) Within the international history of socialism, and still more within the history of the labor movement in Britain, Tawney has a secure place in the pantheon of influential thinkers. Moreover, he was revered for his personality and example as much as for his writings, above all for his unaffected manner, his unworldly asceticism, and his deep sympathy with the efforts of working people to improve their lot, especially through adult education, to which he devoted a great deal of his own time and energy. He remained a cherished figure in English radical and working-class circles long after his death in 1962 at the age of eighty-two. He is one of the few secular figures to whom the label "saint" gets applied unironically.

This makes any kind of reappraisal difficult. Where a saint is concerned, anything short of hagiography is bound to seem debunking or merely negative, even to be taking pleasure in toppling an icon from his pedestal. I feel no such inclination in reconsidering Tawney, in part, perhaps, because I am not old enough, or perhaps just not politically responsive enough, ever to have come under his spell in the first place. In my case, the experience of reading *The Acquisitive Society* (first published in 1921) at the end of the twentieth century is chiefly governed by my formation as an intellectual historian, especially of modern British social and political thought. No modern reader, I imagine, can fail to be struck by the period flavor the book now gives off, but I find myself instinctively moving on to "place" the work in historical and political context, to identify its informing intellectual traditions and its distinguishing cultural affinities. There is, of course, nothing original in remarking Tawney's datedness: even during his lifetime he was recognized as having a somewhat archaic quality, part Victorian moralist, part Old Testament prophet. But, from this distance, *The Acquisitive Society* seems remote at least as much on account of the conditions its writing presupposed as for any outdatedness in its proposals, and in this reconsideration I primarily want to focus on why that might be so.

THE BOOK has long been regarded as one of the classics of socialist political thinking. Richard Crossman, left intellectual turned Labor cabinet minister, may stand in for many others with his declaration that "Tawney's *The Acquisitive Society* is my socialist bible," while a whole generation of historians has concurred with Margaret Cole's judgment of it as "perhaps the most powerful of all post-war appeals for socialism." And yet the book is not in any obvious sense a general manifesto for socialism, nor an outright condemnation of private property and the market—indeed, he dismisses "the idea of some socialists that private property in land or capital is necessarily mischievous" as "a piece of scholastic pedantry." It is not even—as those who know nothing of it other than its title and reputation tend to suppose—primarily an indictment of the advertising and consumerism integral to a mass-market economy. It deals al-

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most entirely with production rather than consumption; it can still come as something of a surprise to find that a book with such a title makes no reference to shopping. For the book offers something that is more general, and yet also more limited, than any of these descriptions might suggest. *The Acquisitive Society* operates at two levels. At the more general, it is a plea that the goals of economic gain, increased productivity, and individual self-interest should be subordinated to some "higher" set of values. At the more specific level, Tawney concentrates on the organization of industry: he argues that with the growth of capitalism has come a divorce between ownership and the actual running of businesses, that the greater part of the income derived from ownership in such circumstances is "functionless wealth," and that society could be beneficially reorganized on the basis of rewarding "functions" rather than of allowing the largely passive owners of capital to accumulate wealth created by others. Until the final chapter, the more general case is only passingly alluded to; it is implicit in Tawney's idiom and moral passion, but it is not argued for in any extended way. Much the greater part of the book is devoted to an analysis of the different forms of relationship between ownership and control in industry, focusing on the need for incomes to be restricted to rewarding the performance of social functions. However, this bald summary of the book's central argument needs to be supplemented by an account of several of its less-noticed features.

First of all, there is the extent to which Tawney depicts the situation he criticizes as a recent and contingent development, brought about by erroneous or inappropriate ideas. The book rests on markedly intellectualist assumptions about social change. It is the individualist idea of property, developed from the late seventeenth century onward, that is at the root of present ills. Enlightenment rationalism prepared the ground for the individualism unleashed by the Industrial Revolution; as so often in this vein of criticism, the Utilitarians and early political economists are singled out for particular opprobrium. The notion of absolute property rights, valuable in the struggle against feudalism and absolutism, has become a curse in the very different conditions of large-scale industry. The opening sentence of the book signals this concern with changing prevailing ideas: "It is a commonplace that the characteristic virtue of Englishmen is their power of sustained practical activity, and their characteristic vice a reluctance to test the quality of that activity by reference to principles." In the body of the book, Tawney explores several means of bringing function and reward into some more direct relation, not all of them involving nationalization, still less expropriation of the owners of capital. For example, he grants that capital may be allowed to earn a certain return, but suggests that this could take the form of a fixed rate, in the manner of a debenture or mortgage, rather than an open-ended claim on the profits of an enterprise. Similarly, he would sever the automatic link between ownership and control, depriving the mere providers of capital of any say in policy or management. But throughout these apparently practical discussions, the idea of absolute, purchasable property rights is the target.

"The acquisitive society" is, therefore, an extremely recent and, he implies, temporary aberration in a longer history of societies that have subordinated the production of wealth to larger social purposes. Indeed, although he sees the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as the vital transition to a historically unprecedented form of society, Tawney is at pains to stress how very recent several of the key features of the acquisitive society actually are. The establishment of shares and dividends as the standard form of financial property was only achieved "less than two generations ago"; the impact of the mid-century legislation on joint stock and limited-liability companies had only been fully felt "within the last twenty years," and so on. Tawney can sound surprisingly indulgent to the much-pilloried owner-managers of the early days of industrialism, because they were at least actively involved in running their businesses; his sharpest barbs are reserved for absentee shareholders in public companies, the undeserving financial beneficiaries of the notion of unlimited property rights.

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This historical account is tacitly underpinned by a considerable idealization of the economic system that preceded the Industrial Revolution: like the Hammonds, whose "catastrophist" interpretation of the rise of industrialism he endorsed, he is for the most part silent about the forms of oppression and exploitation inherent in the economic relationships of early modern England. Instead, the yeoman and the craftsman of a vaguely specified past are lauded at the expense of the all-too-visible *rentier* in the present. "The past has shown no more excellent order than that in which the mass of the people were the masters of the holdings which they ploughed and the tools with which they worked." And the virtues of this direct engagement in productive activity were complemented by the acknowledgment of a larger moral framework. Revealingly, he uses the term "industrialism" to refer not to a socioeconomic system itself, but to an attitude, "a particular estimate of the importance of industry," which results in all other goals becoming secondary to the pursuit of material gain. For Tawney, industrialism signifies "the confusion of one minor department of life with the whole of life." But this characterization implies that if the prevailing ideas could be changed, the problem would be solved—hence his confident conclusion that this "obsession by economic issues is as local and transitory as it is repulsive and disturbing."

This is where the more general moral argument of the book and its interpretation of British history intersect most interestingly. References to the need "to admit that there is a principle superior to the mechanical play of economic forces" and to recognize that society must be based on "some moral principles which command general acceptance" accompany his more substantial discussion like a figured bass repeatedly making itself heard through the main melody. But only when we reach the final chapter is it suddenly revealed that the propagation of such principles was formerly the function of the church, and that it is the "abdication" of this role by the church in Britain from the late seventeenth century onward that allowed economic activity to appear to be an end in itself (Tawney was to develop this theme on a broader canvas in *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, published five years later). In the course of the eighteenth century the Anglican clergy became "the servile clients of a half-pagan aristocracy"; in the nineteenth "they acquiesced in the popular assumption that the acquisition of riches was the main end of man, and confined themselves to preaching such personal virtues as did not conflict with its achievement."

THIS FINAL chapter of the book is entitled *Porro unum necessarium*, a phrase (generally translated as "but one thing is needful") from the Latin Vulgate version of St. Luke's Gospel that had also been used as a chapter heading by Matthew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy*. But whereas Arnold had gently mocked the modern Puritan's conviction of finding in the Bible the one necessary truth—"so fatal is the notion of possessing, even in the most precious words or standards, the one thing needful, of having in them, once and for all, a full and sufficient measure of light to guide us"—Tawney's use of the phrase is quite without ironic intent: the one thing needful is that "society must rearrange its scale of values," and for this to happen the church must resume its historic task.

It is difficult, on closer inspection, to say quite what part an active form of Christianity would play in moving to "the functional society," since Tawney does not identify any relevant content in Christian teaching. Structurally (and, one cannot help suspecting, psychologically), the overriding importance of Christianity for Tawney at this point is simply that it out-trumps economic criteria. It is the organized assertion of an alternative standard of values that he seeks, values to which the calculations of economic reasoning would be subordinate, and in the light of which proximate goals and purposes could be identified in moral, non-economic terms. The biographical evidence leaves the nature of Tawney's own religious beliefs opaque: he appears to have participated in Anglican social organizations and economic discussion groups with more commitment and regularity than he showed in his devotions. (His biographer observed that "he would frequently but not regularly go to

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church, often taking his dog, less frequently his wife.") But one is left feeling that for Tawney as for many other proponents of "social Christianity" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was the idea of the moral glory of the Sermon on the Mount that mattered. The accompanying assumption was that once the authority of this selfless ethic was properly acknowledged, it would not be difficult for men of good will to reach agreement on otherwise divisive matters like the distribution of wealth. Or as the final paragraph of *The Acquisitive Society* confidently has it, once society has "learned to see industry itself in the right perspective" it will be able to "persuade its members to renounce the opportunity of gains which accrue without any corresponding service."

This is recognizably the idiom of the Christian Social Union, which Tawney joined while an undergraduate at Balliol in the late 1890s. Its leaders, such as Canon Scott Holland, Bishop Charles Gore, and Archbishop William Temple, were prominent among the influences and associates that shaped Tawney's thinking. But it is hard not to feel that he was drawn to "social Christianity" because it provided a language with which to censure the unfettered pursuit of material gain; one doesn't get the sense that it was his belief in Christian principles that led him to become such a severe critic of economic self-interest. Perhaps quite a lot of English "socialism" has been like this: sometimes the appeal has been to the overriding values represented by "culture" or "art," sometimes to the ideals incarnated in Ancient Greece, sometimes to the standards of Christian ethics, but the common element has been the desire to invoke some cherished and powerful realm of value to set over against the world of commercial and financial activity that is thereby condemned as much for its vulgarity as for its injustice.

Any "reconsideration" of *The Acquisitive Society* must, at the outset, acknowledge the kind of book it is. It is not a work of philosophy, nor even, in the strict sense, of political theory; it is historical without being genuinely scholarly and it is topical without being merely journalistic. It is nearer in spirit to that kind of essay in social criticism that surrounds certain practical proposals with an appeal to a general moral vision. The writing is marked more by a kind of biblical eloquence than by analytical finesse, and the book's origins in an article and a pamphlet that Tawney published in 1919 remain visible. It does not, therefore, really belong in the company of such works as, say, Lukacs's *History and Class Consciousness* or Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*. Its closest kinship seems to me rather with works like Ruskin's *Unto This Last* or Eliot's *Idea of a Christian Society*.

It has to be said, however, that the book does not really seem to recognize its own identity in these terms, above all because it claims to offer a serious and feasible view of how a sophisticated modern economy might be organized in terms of the rewards necessary to the fulfillment of "functions." But this is precisely, in my view, the weakest feature of the book. Indeed, the central conception of "the Functional Society" strikes me as not just unpersuasive, but also as potentially coercive. Tawney simply ducks the hard questions about the authoritarianism involved in deciding which activities constitute desirable "functions" and which do not, and he deludes himself that there could be any kind of modified market mechanism, short of decision by central authority, by which the appropriate level of "reward" for such functions could be determined. He assumes that others would share his (rather puritan) convictions about what is "worth" doing and what level of "reward" one should legitimately expect: my skepticism about the likelihood of such agreement being reached is only exceeded by my alarm at the consequences it if were.

But to my mind the most damning of the criticisms that can be leveled against Tawney's writings in general, and against *The Acquisitive Society* in particular, is that they are all too likely to encourage high-mindedness for its own sake. Setting up a binary polarity between "self-interest" and "morality" is in itself an unhelpful oversimplification, and one particularly likely to lead to self-deception. Such a starting point also tends to require people to act out of unrealistically strenuous or heroic motives, and involves an unwarranted disdain for

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simple, common wants, such as the desire for ease spiced with excitement. Richard Titmuss, one of Tawney's warmest admirers, was perhaps indirectly acknowledging this tendency when, with fond irony, he remarked that "the severest criticism" to be made of Tawney's social theory "is that it would be easier to realize in practice if all men were Tawneys." Moreover, high-mindedness is constantly rendered inconsistent by shifts in circumstance. Various figures on the British left in the middle of the century testified to the way Tawney's arguments had permanently inoculated them against the temptation of personally owning shares and receiving dividends. But now, given the intricate interdependence of the elements in the financial structure of contemporary capitalism, there looks to be something slightly foolish in deliberately avoiding share-ownership while happily accepting the benefits of a pension fund.

But at the risk of seeming willfully to court paradox, I would even suggest that it is the general attitude or tone of the book that has dated more than its concrete proposals. It is not just that Tawney is too sanguine about the possibility of arriving at some agreed sense of "social purpose" from which more specific "goals" and "functions" could be deduced. It is, rather, that he constantly seems to suggest that the invocation of the idea of "higher principles" is a good in itself. Even if these principles are not given much content, as for the most part they are not in this book, the suggestion is that we range ourselves on the side of the angels by repeating, frequently and with feeling, that moral principle must override unbridled self-interest. But this issues in a tone and a stance that are always in danger of becoming merely moralistic. This in turn tends to encourage a certain self-righteousness and ultimately brings discredit on the critical case against unfettered capitalism, a case which, in more measured and realistic terms, needs to be made as pressingly as ever.

It may be said that the function of utopian thinking is precisely to jolt us out of what we think "realistic" by painting a beguiling picture of life within an utterly different social order. I recognize that I am not the most responsive reader of such utopian critiques. But I would also point out that *The Acquisitive Society* was not offered as such. Tawney clearly intended the book to be severely practical, with concrete proposals for the better as well as fairer management of specific industries, such as coal and building, in 1920s Britain. Indeed, some of its practical suggestions are among the more persuasive parts of the book. But I persist in thinking that the tone of generalized moral uplift with which he surrounded these proposals is bad for the mind. We certainly still need—perhaps more than ever before—a publicly effective language with which to combat the relentless pseudorealism of "the return upon capital" and the priority of "the bottom line." I would like to think that a book by someone so transparently serious and warmhearted as Tawney would be one place to look for help in developing such a language. I fear, however, it is more likely to encourage certain bad habits all too common on the left, above all that of finding consolation for constant defeat in the comforting assurance of one's own greater moral seriousness.

Two years after Tawney's death, Alasdair MacIntyre lodged a memorable dissenting judgment along somewhat similar lines, complaining of his "cliché-ridden high-mindedness," and concluding that in a political theorist "goodness alone is not enough."

THOUGH NEEDLESSLY dismissive, MacIntyre's judgment was in some ways a healthy corrective. Nonetheless, to leave the matter there involves a certain intellectual laziness as well as a rather cheap kind of self-congratulation—it is not difficult, after all, to establish oneself as being more hardheaded than Tawney. The more demanding question is why, if his work now seems to invite such damaging criticism, he exercised such influence and achieved such standing—and why, for that matter, various prominent political and intellectual figures in Britain and elsewhere still profess to draw inspiration from his writings.

Part of the explanation may be structural as much as personal. The left needs intellectuals in the way sports fans need heroes. Tawney seemed to correspond to one idealized

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notion of the intellectual, the figure who achieves distinction in some scholarly or creative field while at the same time "applying" his ideas in active political engagement. Tawney was an economic and social historian of standing, and he wrote widely admired works of social criticism; at the same time, he was tirelessly active in various left-wing or, more accurately, working-class, causes, and he was directly influential in the shaping and expression of Labour Party policy (he played a large part in drafting the party's manifesto for the 1929 election, for example). He was notable for his consistent advocacy of and counsel to working-class groups of all kinds during a period when the organized working class was a major player in British political and economic life. And at a time when print journalism was the undisputedly dominant medium for shaping opinion, Tawney had ready access to some influential publications, and he had what it takes to make a mark: he was not afraid to repeat himself, he wrote forcefully, and he wrote a lot. But more than all this, he gave pointed and relevant expression in the interwar period to attitudes that were deep-seated and of long standing in British culture. Perhaps the moral criticism of capitalism flourished in no other country as it did in Britain between the early nineteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries. The "condition of England" question, that hotchpotch of concerns about the human consequences of the Industrial Revolution, remained a central and recurring theme in public debate, and Tawney was a "condition of England" writer par excellence.

In the 1960s the Young Turks on the *New Left Review* complained that this tradition had not issued in any conceptually sophisticated analysis of the nature and functioning of society, economy, and the state in Britain: it had, they charged, contented itself with the untheoretical, even antitheoretical, task of the moral criticism of capitalism. One does not have to be an enthusiast for the high Althusserian or Gramscian theorizing then offered as the alternative to recognize some truth in this account. But that being so, it is perhaps otiose to single out Tawney for special criticism. Rather, we should recognize that he owed much of his standing to the eloquent expression (and authoritative historical illustration) he gave to the moral commonplaces of the "progressive" educated class in Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In saying this, I do not at all mean to suggest that the ideals at the heart of those commonplaces were so purely a matter of that time and place that, appropriately reformulated, they can no longer move us. Attempting to reduce inequality, attempting to control rather than being controlled by global markets, attempting to make non-economic values tell in public debate—these aims seem to me admirable and urgent, and recognizably connected to the values cherished by Tawney and his peers. But the terms in which I have stated them deliberately suggest a much more modest and realistic (and thereby, perhaps, more liberal) political idiom than that used by Tawney, and this may help explain some of the ambivalence which I (but not, I think, I alone) cannot help feeling about *The Acquisitive Society*. What still seems to me so problematic in Tawney—and the milieu that enabled him to write with such untroubled confidence—is the combination of a sweeping conception of "the functional society" with an assumption of a high degree of moral consensus. The shared commitment to selflessness that he takes for granted can seem not just unrealistic but even in some ways unattractive.

That one's response is ambivalent rather than merely critical is also in part due to the force of Tawney's style—the barbed ironies at the expense of the rich, the almost Miltonic cadences of his Latinate sentence structures, the fine preacherly fire. That eloquence can still, intermittently, do its work, and even the politically skeptical or agnostic modern reader can be seduced into a sense of belonging, if not quite of belief. With Tawney taking the service, the incense of earnestness stirs memories of unfulfilled good resolutions, the pleasing cadences of the liturgy offer reassurance that this is no vulgar evangelical sect, and the urge to go forward and take one's place at the communion rail starts to be felt. Such rituals of identification and solidarity, even if conducted in the privacy of one's mind, have a

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necessary part to play. Perhaps no purposeful large-scale changes in society are brought about unless preceded and accompanied by a considerable amount of what may properly be called moral emotion. Tawney was a virtuoso of moral emotion.

And yet as, the service being over, we return to the lower temperature of our daily lives, stubborn doubts and even antipathies start to creep back in. Underlying the arguments and proposals of *The Acquisitive Society* and Tawney's other political writings, there is a simple, massive assertion that the teaching of morality points toward the politics of socialism. Not only may the destination now look more uncertain and the logic of the connection more disputable, but few of those likely to read Tawney today can easily share his unargued conviction about the nature and force of something called "morality." For Tawney, and perhaps for the first couple of generations of his readers in Britain, "morality" had talismanic power, warding off demons of all kinds. It can no longer be confidently expected to play this role, nor do we really feel we would want it to. Not the least of the ways in which we are conscious of inhabiting a different world from Tawney's may lie in our grudging recognition that the demons have most of the best tunes. ●

STEFAN COLLINI's books include *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930* and *Matthew Arnold: A Critical Portrait*. His new book *English Pasts* is forthcoming in 1999.

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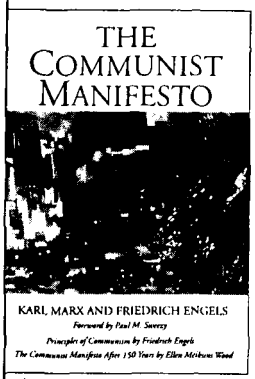

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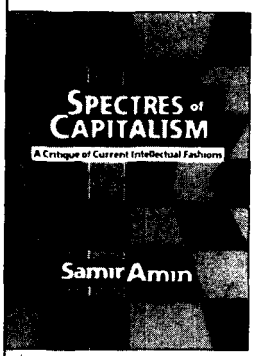

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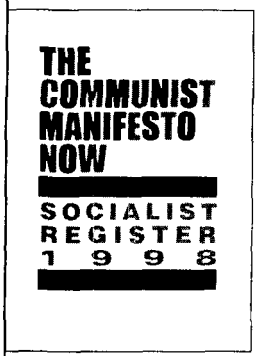

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Naming the Struggle

Thomas Frank

BIG TROUBLE: A MURDER IN A SMALL WESTERN TOWN SETS OFF A STRUGGLE FOR THE SOUL OF AMERICA
by J. Anthony Lukas
Simon & Schuster, 1997 875 pp $32.50

IF CLASS IS the key to history, here in America it is a secret key, at once central and unsayable. Informing so much of our national life, it is at the same time the social divide we will not permit ourselves to mention. From the banalities of *Titanic* to the pious equations of the neoclassical economists, we are believers all in the national myth of opportunity; we can conceive of class in no other way than as a temporary setback to be overcome with a winning smile, a particularly servile manner as we arrange the plates on the table, a diligent judiciousness choosing our lottery numbers.

Add to this the national myth of pastlessness and the American problem with imagining class becomes even more acute. Who cares how things got to be the way they are? Of what concern to us are the problems of workers a hundred years ago? Alien to notions of boundless future opportunity and subject to the American disease of instant forgetting, class has become the story of persecution that somehow never catches the imagination of contemporary audiences; the drama of struggle and justice denied that only rarely makes up the plots of Hollywood movies. Class conflict is, almost by definition, a conflict that Americans forget.

In this light there's something distinctly heroic about *Big Trouble*, the late J. Anthony Lukas's dense, 875-page account of the 1906–1907 kidnapping and trial of Bill Haywood and two other leaders of the Western Federation of Miners for the murder of a former governor of Idaho. The episode and its leading characters—the fiery Haywood, who seemed like class war incarnate; superstar strikebreaker James McParland; the great defense attorney Clarence Darrow; Republican Senator William Borah, acting as prosecutor for the state of Idaho; and the murdered ex-Governor Frank Steunenberg himself, elected with Populist votes but later earning the hatred of labor for his ruthless suppression of an 1899 strike—was once as well known and as divisive to Americans as the Dreyfus Affair was to the French.

Today, though, even as the class divide becomes a crevasse and as American workers experience the working conditions of a hundred years ago, the Steunenberg-Haywood affair is as distant as the War of Jenkins's Ear. Against this irresistible tide of forgetting Anthony Lukas has performed a gargantuan act of remembering, has tackled what is simultaneously the biggest social cleavage of all and the great American unmentionable. It's as though, after completing *Common Ground*, his masterful 1985 account of racial conflict in Boston, he was compelled to write an even bigger book on the biggest conflict of them all: the great, secret ur-conflict of class.

And, indeed, the America Lukas describes is unrecognizable from the blithe tales of progress and inclusiveness that make up our official national history. The America of *Big Trouble* is on the verge of explosion, a place where savage battles between workers and the hired armies of management occur so regularly and in so many different places that they become difficult to distinguish; where hijacked trains and dynamited plants and citizens' militias are fairly commonplace; where the American left is something found just as easily on the high plains of Kansas and the silver fields of Idaho as the coffee shops of New York City; where state governments routinely toss the en-

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tire male populations of pro-union regions into concentration camps (called "bull pens"; yes, it actually happened); where Populists are radicals and Socialists run newspapers; where the rule of law itself is suspended whenever capital is put in danger.

Labor history having roughly the status in the official annals of American consciousness as tales of abduction by space aliens, Lukas's painstaking and accessible recounting of these episodes must bring a certain feeling of vindication to devotees of the subject. Virtually every strand of the tale is here, rendered in exhaustive detail: the Pinkerton-orchestrated kidnapping of Haywood and his colleagues from their homes in Denver to stand trial in Idaho; McParland's notoriety as the man who busted the Molly Maguires; the hideous tales of industrial battle in Coeur d'Alenes and Cripple Creek; the machinations by which the state of Idaho coaxed money from mine owners to bankroll its case against the labor leaders; the rise of *The Appeal to Reason*, the Kansas-based socialist newspaper whose circulation could hit several million on special occasions; the massive, nationwide protests that followed President Theodore Roosevelt's 1907 declaration that Haywood and Eugene Debs were "undesirable citizens." Nor is *Big Trouble* a pro-labor volume in the automatic, unquestioning way that has often rendered labor writing so unreadable: Lukas's narrative style is dispassionate, even cold, a feeling of aloofness made emphatic by the horror of the events he has chosen to describe. Furthermore, Lukas seems honestly to admire the derring-do of the Pinkerton men. He finds evidence to suggest that Darrow won the case by bribing a crucial witness. He poohpoohs the zanier rhetoric of Debs and company, gravitating always to the less fervid reporting of the mainstream newspapers of the day.

Lukas's assumptions and techniques are those of a newspaper writer, and his journalistic style gives the book an oddly sphinxlike character. It may be 875 pages long, but it absolutely refuses to explain itself. Lukas makes none of the broader conclusions that historians traditionally give to justify their researches; he gives no suggestion what the purpose of his insistent hammering might be, no larger reason for his determined unearthing of stories that no one has cared about for fifty years.

Perhaps the book's bulk, its exhaustive and needless detail, its massive sifting of data, is simply an assertion, a defiance of forgetting: these things *did* happen. This is a country where class war was once as common as celebrity feuds are today. Other authors have made the same point, of course. Louis Adamic's depression-era book *Dynamite*, a lively but now-forgotten history of American class war, set out, like *Big Trouble*, to demonstrate for mainstream readers that America was hardly the land of classlessness and social consensus that its official myths proclaim it to be. But if the general audiences of 1931 were, amid a brief bout of poverty-induced sanity, willing to grant some modicum of validity to Adamic's thesis—why, yes, there is class conflict in America!—those of our own day seem to regard this modest idea as some sort of intellectual treason.

ONE HAS TO admire the audacity of Lukas's project. In this era of unprecedented middle-class contentment, masquerading as a recorder of patriotic trivia, he has set out to do nothing less than dynamite the American consensus. And he has written a book that, in terms of its vast size, seems appropriate for the job. But faced with such a titanic task, one feels, Lukas occasionally loses his way. The book's most remarkable narrative device is a sort of compulsive comprehensiveness, a tendency to digress extensively in order to explain every unfamiliar detail, to retell every associated fact, to meditate on every character connected with the case. The book sometimes reads as though Lukas felt he was the last person left who could do justice to all these characters, set all the facts straight, get this story right once and for all. The technique was obviously designed to buttress the book's primary assertion: that there *was* pervasive class conflict across the American economic and cultural landscape, and it reached to here and to here and to here, and it touched this person's life, and this person's, and this person's. But the digressive style serves as often to dilute and obscure the book's powerful main narrative as it does to enliven it. Worse, as Lukas widens his narrative net, the technique sometimes be-

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comes pointless: he spends a number of pages relating the saga of baseball pitcher Walter Johnson, whose only relationship to Haywood et al. is that he played for a town in Idaho at the time of the trial. At other times the digressions descend into self-parody: Lukas begins a chapter by introducing the possibility that Steunenberg was murdered in retaliation for his brutal suppression of an 1899 miners' strike, retreats from that to a description of Idaho's physical dimensions, and by the end of the page has retreated from there to a narrative of "events 1.2 billion years ago," when geological activity, which he follows just as he might a movement of troops or a fashion preferred by the Idaho elite, produced the gold, lead, and silver that brought the miners to the region in the 1890s.

Lukas's almost frantic effort to nail down every factual loose end stands in curious contrast to the methods and narrative techniques of the social historians who ordinarily deal with subjects of this kind. Although works of social history often obsess over obscure particulars, they usually do so insofar as these support or call into question larger theories about the past. Lukas, though, seems only faintly aware of the standard interpretations of the period. And while it is easy to dismiss the lesser works of social history for their lack of narrative dash—think of all the dry, number-heavy speculation about farm life in the eighteenth century, all the pages of interpretation built on church attendance records or on euphemisms in someone's diary—one ignores the central premises of social history at one's peril. That the superstars—the kick-ass trial lawyers, the prominent sleuths, the colorful editors, the U.S. senators, the society swells—really aren't the only game in town. That a nice story does not a history make.

Strangely, Lukas's earlier writing succeeded by embracing the social-history sensibility. In *Common Ground*, the digressive style functioned beautifully to give his characters—average folk all—precisely the depth and rootedness that his social planners ignored as they devised their world-remaking schemes. By the end of *Big Trouble*, though, the digressions just drag. Often one feels that Lukas has simply thrown restraint to the winds, given up trying to distinguish when to write and when just to let something pass without elucidating its every facet.

Stranger still, the book's characters themselves seem to counsel against the journalistic, personality-centered approach. The best-known passage of Darrow's famous closing argument in the Haywood trial was a powerful evocation of the transcendence of class conflict: "William Haywood is no better than the rest. He can die if die he must. He can die if this jury decrees it; but, oh, gentlemen, do not think for a moment that if you hang him you will crucify the labor movement of the world. . . . There are others and these others will come to take his place." The struggle over industrial power was not even primarily a conflict between personalities, Darrow argued. The fate of Great Men mattered little to the critical issues at hand. This is, of course, the credo of the social historians, and perhaps this is also what makes their accounts of events like these so dust-dry.

By rejecting Darrow's admonition, Lukas permits himself to write a compelling tale. But the journalistic technique has weaknesses, too. Consider, for example, the odd statement that concludes the book:

> Finally, the opposing camps in this nasty class war sputtering along the icy ridges of the Rocky Mountains had just about canceled each other out. Operative for operative, hired gun for hired gun, bought juror for bought juror, perjured witness for perjured witness, conniving lawyer for conniving lawyer, partisan reporter for partisan reporter, these cockeyed armies had fought each other to an exhausted standoff.

To be sure, readers may be exhausted by the time they reach this line, but "exhaustion" seems precisely the wrong word for what has gone on in America since 1907. For the capitalist side at least, the exacting of wealth is an almost organic bit of the economic environment, as subject to exhaustion as gravity. What makes class conflict such a dynamic element of history is precisely the fact that it went on—and it continues to go on—regardless of the conclusions reached by any juries, the results of any strikes, or the fate of any particular leaders. ●

THOMAS FRANK is editor-in-chief of the *Baffler* magazine and author of *The Conquest of Cool*.

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Children of Paradise

George Packer

COLD NEW WORLD:
GROWING UP IN A HARDER COUNTRY
by William Finnegan. Random House, 1998
421 pp $26

COLD NEW WORLD does what certain novels used to do: reveal the moral condition of a time and place by telling stories on a large, intimate scale. Near the end of his book, William Finnegan introduces what in fiction would be called a minor character: Ronda Hardin—"a willowy, ice-blond sixteen-year-old" in an outer Los Angeles suburb who has connections with a neo-Nazi skinhead gang. Ronda talked "in a breathy, high, almost reverential voice, about 'my hatred' . . . as if the thought of this burning racial animus itself evoked a kind of tender awe." Finnegan (who is a friend of mine) doesn't stop with this observed nuance. He goes on to situate the hatred, the girl, the tone of voice: "The frame around everything she said was . . . a sense of loss—loss of a marginal color-caste privilege that, in her mind, was supposed to keep black people beneath her socially, and in that way somehow prevent the worst from happening to her. Because she lacked that reassurance, her beloved hatred seemed to be a main prop of her self-respect."

The passage—there are dozens like it—is typical of Finnegan's approach to his subject, which is the downward mobility of four American communities in the nineties and its effect on a few young people. He listens, alert to speech and all its shadings, capturing the minutest motions of character so that even Ronda Hardin, for a paragraph, comes alive on the page in her individual idiosyncrasies and tribal markings. Then, in the next paragraph or the next chapter, he moves outward to take in the world that made Ronda Hardin, going by the maxim that "What young people show us is simply the world we have made for them." This reportorial method places in tension the individual and society, the unique and the representative, personal failing and structural breakdown, the impulse to observe and the impulse to explain, the writer "reluctant to sit in judgment" and the writer who occasionally can't help judging and even intervening. The result isn't confusion or contradiction but a kind of narrative polyphony, with nothing ever comfortable or settled. *Cold New World* is starkly dramatized, carefully researched, passionately argued, and so thick with detail that, when Finnegan allows himself a conclusion—even one that's immediately qualified or questioned—it carries unusual authority. His relentless attention to the textured lives of these teenagers also has a gradually demoralizing effect, for the cumulative vision is of lost souls wandering around in a wasted landscape at once drearily familiar and chillingly new.

A young black drug dealer in New Haven, residents of a small East Texas town caught in the federal drug war, the violently alienated son of Mexican union farmworkers near Seattle, white racist and antiracist skinheads in the bedroom sprawl of the L.A. desert: when the *New Yorker* ran these four reports in its pages, especially the last three, readers got a distortingly condensed version of what *Cold New World* offers. The portraits were intimate but narrow, gripping as Finnegan's repeated visits turned up increasingly twisted relationships and fates, but lacking essential context—more like short stories than pieces of a novel. *Cold New World* is more than the sum of its *New Yorker* parts. The introduction and epilogue and notes, along with new material (a minor character who puts a major one in re-

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lief, an explanatory passage, a sociological detour), make it clear that Finnegan isn't just a gifted watcher and listener. He has a framework for these stories—an idea—which essentially goes like this: growing inequality and shrinking opportunity, combined with "the fecklessness and self-absorption of my generation" of parents (baby boomers, of all races and classes), has left the next adult Americans vulnerable to a nasty synesthesia of drugs, frantic consumerism, violently primitive ideologies, and pervasive despair. This idea takes in both economic and moral causes and, without letting the kids entirely off the hook (Finnegan's stance is simultaneously ironic, worried, exasperated, and seduced), accepts Christopher Lasch's point that "their dislocation is a measure of our failure, not theirs." It makes even the most bizarre and self-destructive behavior at least partly comprehensible as an inchoate response to real pressures. By the end, the finger is pointing back at the author himself, who stands for you and me.

THIS INDICTMENT creeps up on the reader, as it seems to have crept up on Finnegan. The book starts with a fifteen-year-old black youth who gets drawn almost inexorably into the New Haven crack trade—in other words, a figure we think we know. This affords a psychic distance for both writer and reader that may be partly illusory but that also, I think, gives Finnegan enough room to produce his densest and most intense pages. The outlines of Terry Jackson's life, and his mother's and girlfriends' and homeboys', basically conform to grim type. The achievement here is in the "unofficial" moments that a more conventional reporter wouldn't have even seen, let alone known how to handle. Having dropped Terry in downtown New Haven, Finnegan watches from his slowly moving car: "He is in a good mood, and he cuts through the crowd on the sidewalk with a vivid, rising step. I notice other pedestrians shying from him, and suddenly I see him through the eyes of an elderly white woman with a shopping bag who grimaces and braces herself as Terry sweeps past her. He does not look in her direction—his eyes are fixed on the mall ahead—but he is a young black male, strong and fast, in a parka and sneakers and a ski cap that says 'Loco,' and that's all the woman needs to see to feel a cold wave of fear. That's all, I realize, that most of us need to see."

What we get isn't the cheap journalistic insight that Terry is a sympathetic human being, too. A lot of the time he isn't very sympathetic, and as for being human, every page shows him responding to the "barbaric, twilight world" in which he finds himself caught. Instead, Finnegan's moral imagination makes us see ourselves in relation to Terry: having come to know this young man deeply, his stubborn recklessness and his sweet dreams, we are suddenly forced to see him the way we see every threatening black youth on the street. Yet even here, the judgment is implicit: this is the way things are in the world we've inherited and made our own.

In New Haven, the villain is structural unemployment, the ruins of deindustrialization seen in cities all across the North and felt most sharply by blacks. You leave this part of the book disturbed but unsurprised, and go down to San Augustine, Texas—a small town of the deep South where both blacks and whites live in a feudal relation to the sheriff. For forty years it has been the racially benign and probably crooked Nathan Tindall. But the arrival of cocaine has created an exaggerated sense of siege, especially among whites. The feds' Operation White Tornado turns tiny San Augustine into a battleground of the drug war, with numerous casualties, including some of the town's more promising black entrepreneurs, as well as Nathan Tindall himself.

This section feels a bit diffuse and long, the book's only lull. It takes in not one or two characters but the complex relations of a whole town, and a town that speaks of continuity more than change. The cocaine raids may have replaced the old patron sheriff with a new and harsher law-enforcement model, but they have also reaffirmed race and class divisions as old as slavery. The main difficulty is that East Texas doesn't corroborate Finnegan's central themes—it's an exception to them. "I am convinced," he writes in his introduction, "that nearly all Americans already belong to basically the same culture," whose belief system is "liberal consumerism—

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a secular, individualist creed that essentially adds more shopping hours to the old exaltation of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Of his four settings, only San Augustine fails to bear this out. There, southern black culture persists in its "fierce, hard-earned realism." Deindustrialization hasn't changed the economics of race and pulpwood hauling. The downward mobility of Finnegan's main character here, a vibrant twenty-three-year-old black woman named Lanee Mitchell, into single-motherhood and a poultry job seems relatively slight compared to that of her younger analogues in the other sections. Her hometown is a real place, not a residential accident; it still focuses people's lives and relationships. The ancient poverty and injustice of San Augustine almost seem benign next to the hollowed-out American landscapes Finnegan elsewhere brings to the page.

THE PICTURE grows darker and less stable in the book's last two sections. Juan Guerrero, young Chicano antihero from the Yakima Valley near Seattle, is something of an enigma. With hardworking parents dedicated to the farmworkers' union, an attractive and ambitious girlfriend, and an ironic intelligence of his own, he seems poised to cash in on the immigrant's perennial dream. Instead, Juan's penchant for street fighting gets him thrown out of school and into jail. His life and his family's well-being are threatened by rival gang members out for revenge. Chicano nationalism and Mexico itself are unavailable fallbacks for this first-generation American, whose favorite movie is *Natural Born Killers*. A kind of paralyzing anomie overcomes Juan. In one of the many indelible quotes that fill this book, Juan shrugs and tells Finnegan, "It's all cool, in a way, I would say."

He's headed downward. In Juan's case, though, the economic and generational explanations aren't completely persuasive. Juan's younger brother seems to be doing well. The parents are at home, they worry over Juan, have given him a model of hard work and political idealism (which leaves him cold). School holds no interest for him. Gangs have become a major problem, but we don't have enough evidence to pronounce the school system hopeless. As for work, there are opportunities in Seattle that Juan's girlfriend appears ready to seize, until she gravitates back to her jailed lover. "He still seemed hopeful that he might have other chances in life, a trajectory that might be all his own," Finnegan writes. "But what did I know about Juan, really?" In his cool rebellion Juan is slightly reminiscent of that long-ago type, the hipster. So what's different—new—about his world?

The answer might be less tangible than economic contraction and generational abandonment. It seems to have more to do with our culture. The example Juan might have absorbed from his parents is bound to dissolve when immersed in the wider American scene. Commercialism is far stronger than Rafael and Rosa Guerrero. "The pop culture that formed so much of [Juan's] world view simply provided no referents for their kind of heroism. The nobility of labor was no longer even a minor value in the devouring consumerism of the America where he was growing up." So perhaps the main difference between Juan and his teenage ancestors of earlier generations is the mental atmosphere of the country in which he's been raised—the difference, say, between *Rebel Without a Cause* and *Natural Born Killers*. To Juan, much of American reality seems "weird," and yet there is no other place for him. "MTV-raised farmworkers' kids like Juan ended up gazing out into a society that, beyond the most immediate circle of family and friends, looked deeply atomized and alien. Even Terry Jackson, in New Haven . . . seemed more at home in his world."

For alienation and dislocation, nothing in the book equals its last part. The Antelope Valley is one valley farther from L.A. than the scene of Finnegan's own happy middle-class adolescence, in the 1960s. He went back, he writes, "looking for the kind of place where I grew up," but more likely he was looking for the kind of frightening mutation that he found. The Antelope Valley, one of L.A.'s fastest-growing bedroom communities, became during the early-nineties recession the scene of financial disaster, widespread crystal-methamphetamine use, and an ugly, low-intensity war among various gangs, especially the racist Nazi Low Riders and the Sharps, or Skinheads

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Against Racial Prejudice. Each of these fraternities claims skinhead authenticity, but apart from their opposing racial ideologies, they seem more and more to resemble each other in their aimless afternoons spent lounging around parentless houses, their musical obsessions, their love of violence, and their contempt for the girls who hang on them. Every kid Finnegan meets is in trouble. Their liberal-minded, hard-pressed, or just strung-out parents are bewildered.

Mindy Turner, who started using speed in ninth grade, has gone from one side to the other and incurred the wrath of both gangs while clinging to her neo-Nazi boyfriend. She is sweet, vacuous, frightened. Her political ideal is "free unity"; her hero is Charles Manson, and at the end of the book she becomes the pen pal of James Burmeister, the U.S. Army paratrooper and white supremacist charged with randomly killing two blacks in North Carolina. By the time a black Sharp named Darius stabs to death a Nazi Low Rider at a party, Finnegan seems to have lost his powers of sympathetic interpretation. One feels him pulling away from the rigors of observation and identification. "I had found the valley more disturbing, in many ways, than the other communities featured in this book. It was the wealthiest of them, certainly, but it was also the least coherent. Its young people seemed the most seriously lost, its public spaces the most forbidding." Finnegan, who has written three books about southern Africa, feels in the Antelope Valley a nausea worse than anything that overcame him in war-torn Mozambique. "It contained, I realized, more shame."

Why? Because "Navigating the teen world of the Antelope Valley felt, at times, like wading through the sucking bogs of my own generation's crash site." Among the wastes of tract housing, Finnegan comes upon the generation that his own raised—the next William Finnegans. And he sees enough of himself in them, especially in Mindy's neo-Nazi boyfriend, Jaxon Stines, to register both a sense of responsibility and horror. In shorthand, a generation that worshiped personal freedom has produced a generation whose sense of drastically reduced possibility has led Jaxon Stines to worship violent restrictions on freedom.

The generational argument, of course, is harder to make than the economic one. When Finnegan isolates Terry Jackson's chaotic, drug-addicted mother, Anjelica, as "an image of my generation's performance as parents," counterimage comes to mind of a pair of professional white forty-somethings urging their two-year-old Hannah to articulate her needs. In the end they may destroy their child, too, but in a wholly different way. What one can say is that while Hannah's every burp is being monitored, the fate of other, less privileged children (many of them white) is left increasingly to the mercies of the market and the skills of their beleaguered, distracted, or simply incompetent parents.

Southern California was the birthplace of the tax revolt, and the Antelope Valley gives Finnegan plenty of scope to comment on the effect of this public abandonment on schools, communities, and teenagers. One crucial aspect of the new generation's worldview is the lack of a political ideology more viable and appealing than, for example, James Burmeister's. Finnegan's own politics are social democratic (and thus completely opaque to his subjects). "I, for what it's worth, blame the government. There has been a disastrous lag in policy response both to deindustrialization and to changes in the American family." These words might give comfort to readers of this magazine, who presumably agree on the need for such a policy response. But *Cold New World* is not a comforting book. By implication, it indicts those of us in the generation and class that have maximized freedom and opportunity—and then "wonder why the world at large has become harsher and more cynical, why our kids have become strange to us." ●

GEORGE PACKER's novel *Central Square* will be published in October by Graywolf.

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Parting the Country

Clayborne Carson

PILLAR OF FIRE:
AMERICA IN THE KING YEARS, 1963–65
by Taylor Branch
Simon & Schuster, 1998 746 pp $30

TAYLOR BRANCH's new volume is a major achievement—a product of prodigious research and a gift for storytelling on an epic scale. Taken together with his earlier Pulitzer Prize–winning *Parting the Waters* and his projected third volume, *At Canaan's Edge*, Branch's attempt to write "a narrative history of the civil rights movement" promises to be the most lucid and comprehensive account of the modern African-American freedom struggle that we will have for many years. Few historians can equal his narrative skills—especially his ability to dramatize events and delineate personalities. "I have tried to make biography and history reinforce each other by knitting together a number of personal stories along the main seam of the American epoch," he explains.

Pillar of Fire recounts the end of one era of American politics and the beginning of another. Branch's title places Martin Luther King, Jr., at the center of an American political era, but it does not reflect a Great Man theory of history. Instead, it is a rebuke against the tendency of some historians—not to mention most white political leaders—to relegate modern African-American leaders and freedom struggles to the margins of the nation's political life. Branch recognizes that the issue of black-white relations has always shaped American political life, even when national leaders wanted to believe otherwise. For a brief period in the middle of the 1960s, he recounts, brave and determined civil rights activists made the issue impossible for white political leaders to ignore. These activists won the battle for historic civil rights legislation, but their victory, achieved at great cost, was not decisive in the long-term war for control of the American state.

Although Branch draws attention to King's unique role, he is too knowledgeable about the African-American struggle to depict him as a general ordering obedient foot soldiers into battle. Indeed, after the Montgomery bus boycott ended in 1956, his involvement in local movements was only sporadic. Branch demonstrates that King's unique contribution was not as a grassroots organizer but as a source of inspiration and moral guidance for local civil rights campaigns initiated and sustained by others. His oratory convinced protesters that they were making history and that their unmerited suffering was not only redemptive but politically potent. King was also a bridge between local activism and national politics. He accomplished the daunting task of working cooperatively with strong-minded grassroots leaders such as Robert Hayling and Fred Shuttlesworth, who welcomed King's support but had their own notions regarding how the struggle could be won. He also worked with prickly and often envious national civil rights leaders, such as NAACP head Roy Wilkins. Finally, and most important, King understood better than any other leader of his generation the unfulfilled potential of the nation's broad, interracial liberal reform coalition, which, since its beginnings in the 1930s, had avoided confronting the potentially divisive issues of segregation and racial discrimination.

King and other civil rights activists called upon liberal Democratic leaders to live up to their egalitarian ideals rather than continue to compromise with the party's Dixiecrat wing. They discovered, however, that the administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson weighed their commitment to civil

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rights reform against their desire to retain southern white support and to combat communist subversion at home and abroad. Branch's depiction of how the two presidents confronted (or failed to confront) the nation's racial problems is hardly flattering.

Kennedy's primary identity as a cold warrior was far more significant than his belated conversion to the civil rights cause. As Branch pointed out in his first volume, Kennedy's highly publicized intervention in 1960 to gain King's release from jail—an action that attracted the black votes that made possible his razor-thin election victory—resulted from the initiative of his staff rather than from deeply felt convictions of his own. Kennedy's famous speech in June 1963 announcing the introduction of omnibus civil rights legislation was spurred less by his professed belief that civil rights was a "moral issue as old as the scriptures" and "as clear as the American Constitution" than by the need to respond to the Birmingham demonstrations and George Wallace's challenge to his authority. He offered the nation moral prescriptions that his own administration had never followed.

Johnson, for his part, came to the presidency with a sincere commitment to civil rights reform. Whereas Kennedy came of age politically during World War II and the cold war, Johnson was the offspring of the New Deal. Kennedy saw civil rights legislation as an impediment to his reform agenda; Johnson came to see it as a necessary precondition for his. He saw the alliance of southern racism and southern conservatism as an obstacle that had to be overcome in order to make possible the New Deal–type social-welfare programs that he favored. According to Branch, Johnson restrained his advocacy of civil rights while serving as Kennedy's vice president, but his emerging views were expressed in a May 1963 address at Gettsyburg: "While not as cogent or nearly as poetic as Lincoln, Johnson stuck single-mindedly to his theme that American democracy must rise above the divisions of race to survive," Branch reports.

In depicting Johnson, Branch makes good use of the recently released tape recordings of Johnson's meetings and phone calls that have been compiled in Michael R. Beschloss's fascinating book and audiobook, *Taking Charge: The Johnson White House Tapes, 1963–1964*. Johnson's private conversations reveal him to be a larger-than-life figure: both a determined racial reformer and a boorish leader given to bigoted language; both a fervent admirer of Franklin Roosevelt and a crony of southern segregationist politicians. Though there is much in the recordings that confirms Johnson's negative image as a politician with crude habits, few scruples, and residual racial prejudices, he took a forceful stand in favor of civil rights reform. He adopted Kennedy's civil rights proposals and pushed for their passage with greater tenacity and effectiveness than his predecessor, even while recognizing that this course involved political risks. Branch observes that soon after taking office Johnson bluntly informed his close friend, Georgia senator Richard Russell, of his determination to enact the civil rights bill: "I'm going to pass it just as it is, Dick, and if you get in my way I'm going to run you down. I just want you to know that, because I care about you." Johnson doubtless also took seriously Russell's response: "Mr. President, you may be right, but if you do run over me, it will not only cost you the South, it will cost you the election."

RUSSELL'S DIRE PREDICTION proved only slightly premature: the Democratic Party survived the white backlash of 1964 but was harmed by the racial divisions that followed. Johnson was unable or unwilling to follow through on a strategy of building sufficient black electoral support to counteract white desertions. Such a strategy would have required Johnson to give at least as much attention to the cause of racial equality as he gave to the primary concern of his presidency: the war in Vietnam. Despite the fact that he was initially less concerned with foreign affairs than Kennedy, Johnson was tragically willing to risk his domestic agenda in order to combat communism in Vietnam. Moreover, although he was prepared to take political risks on behalf of black advancement, Johnson was caught between two inexorable forces: on one side, impatient and embittered black militants, who had become increasingly skeptical about Democratic liberalism, and on the other side,

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conservative Republicans eager to capitalize on the white backlash against black militancy.

The highlight of Branch's volume is his account of the August 1964 Democratic convention. Johnson's objective on the eve of the convention was to outflank a feared challenge from Robert Kennedy by selecting a vice presidential nominee, Hubert Humphrey, who would be even more closely tied than Kennedy to New Deal liberalism. Johnson believed that Humphrey would allay the lingering suspicions of civil rights and labor leaders that the new president was not a reliable ally. He also expected that Humphrey and other liberals would prove their loyalty by resolving the single controversy that seemed capable of disrupting the convention: the attempt of the racially integrated Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) to take the seats of the state's all-white regular delegation.

He told Senator Humphrey that "if we mess with the group of Negroes . . . we will lose fifteen states without even campaigning." Saying he did not want to be "panicky or desperate," he told Roy Wilkins that "the cause you fought for all your life is likely to be reversed and go right down the drain if you don't . . . find some possible solution."

In retrospect, Johnson's concerns about the MFDP can be dismissed as paranoia—his nomination was never really in question. Nevertheless, the MFDP challenge to the credentials of the regular delegates suggested the larger difficulties he faced in trying to hold together a Democratic Party that included both civil rights activists and southern segregationists. Since the late 1940s, the party had faced the danger of fracture along racial lines. Fearing that the MFDP challenge could stimulate a southern white walkout and a Kennedy putsch, Johnson combated the MFDP supporters with a degree of desperation and viciousness that seems, at least in retrospect, totally out of proportion to the danger. In addition to heavy-handed attempts to dissuade Democratic delegates from supporting the challenge, he accepted the help of J. Edgar Hoover's FBI in securing information about the plans not only of the MFDP but also of his own attorney general, Robert Kennedy.

No words could cure Johnson's fears of racial emotion in combination with the Kennedy myth. He had already arranged to postpone until safely past the close of major convention business two much anticipated events—a film tribute to the slain president and Jacqueline Kennedy's appearance at a marathon reception to shake the hand of each Democratic delegate. To guard against schemes to set loose floods of mourning that might sweep away normal arrangements, including his nomination, Johnson tasked Deke DeLoach and his undercover FBI squad to mount surveillance of Robert Kennedy, their nominal boss, in tandem with King and the Negro challengers.

Highlighted by Fannie Lou Hamer's emotional testimony before the credentials committee, the MFDP effort embarrassed Johnson by demonstrating that the challengers, rather than the regular Democrats, best reflected the president's own principles (most of Mississippi's regular Democrats went on to support Barry Goldwater in the election). More important, the response of the Johnson forces to the MFDP also exposed the habitual willingness of the liberal wing of the Democratic party to compromise on the issue of black civil rights in order to gain and retain political office.

Johnson succeeded in scaring off support for the MFDP, but at the terrible cost of fostering distrust that would poison the racial reform coalition for the next generation. He was elected by a landslide over the hapless Goldwater, but his untrustworthy leadership provided a ready target for Black Power advocates and for Republican conservatives who combined Goldwater's ideology with the political acumen of Nixon and Reagan. Johnson's Great Society foundered on the dilemmas that had troubled Democratic liberals since the New Deal: how could liberal Democrats attract black support without alienating white voters unwilling to abandon southern Jim Crow and northern de facto segregation? How could they enact major social reform programs that would ameliorate racial discord without making themselves vulnerable to the charge of being too pro-black or socialistic?

Johnson was willing to take on the Jim Crow system, but he was not willing to chal-

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lenge the underlying assumptions of Democratic Party liberalism. He secured passage of major civil rights legislation but would not abandon the racial paternalism that assumed that white liberals would determine the pace and direction of racial reform. His Great Society was a hodgepodge of programs that lacked ideological coherence or consistent class implications. Underfunded and burdened with the enormous inefficiencies caused by payoffs for local Democratic leaders as well as salaries for antipoverty bureaucrats, Johnson's War on Poverty became a minor skirmish followed by quick retreat.

BRANCH ENDS his account in the winter of 1965, soon after Malcolm X's assassination and on the eve of King's march from Selma to Montgomery. This is a somewhat odd narrative choice, apparently driven by the author's decision to devote considerable attention to the last year of Malcolm X's life. Malcolm's fateful break with the Nation of Islam is a fascinating story, but his effort to build an independent Pan-African movement actually attracted negligible support before his assassination in February 1965. Indeed, it was Malcolm's marginality from the mainstream of American politics that spurred his disenchantment with Elijah Muhammad's apolitical version of Islam. Malcolm's posthumous influence far exceeded that which he achieved during his lifetime. His literary collaborator, Alex Haley, is as responsible as Malcolm himself for the black nationalist leader's accession to icon status comparable to King's. Nevertheless, the attention given to Malcolm may make sense in the overall design of Branch's trilogy, for the resurgence of African-American racial consciousness during the mid-1960s was among the many indications that, despite Johnson's landslide victory, a historic rightward drift of American politics had begun. On one side, Malcolm-inspired black militancy moved away from King's coalition politics toward psychologically rewarding yet often politically inert identity politics. On the other side, millions of white voters adopted their own form of racial identity politics. Branch notes, for example, that "California voters embraced both Johnson and a constitutional right to segregated neighborhoods, as promoted by Ronald Reagan and the real estate industry. Proposition 14 carried California nearly two to one, winning fifty-seven of fight-eight counties and nearly half a million votes more than Johnson." Both sides of the racially divided electorate increasingly distrusted government and doubted its ability to improve the lives of ordinary citizens.

Johnson saw his landslide as a mandate, but the reform coalition that brought him to office had already begun to disintegrate. Many northern Democratic liberals lost enthusiasm for racial reform once the target of black militance shifted from the southern Jim Crow system to de facto segregation in northern schools, housing, and employment. After the Goldwater debacle, Republican politicians exploited the Democratic Party's festering racial, gender, and ethnic divisions by promising to maintain New Deal and Great Society programs that benefited middle-class whites while condemning "big government" efforts to deal with racial and class inequality. The 1964 election would be the last presidential election of the century in which a majority of white voters supported a Democratic candidate. It would also be the last in which a majority of white voters and black voters supported the same presidential candidate. America was leaving behind the King years and entering the Reagan years. ●

CLAYBORNE CARSON is a professor of history at Stanford University and editor of the forthcoming *Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*

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The Ends of Ideology

Jeffrey Scheuer

LEFT AND RIGHT: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A POLITICAL DISTINCTION
by Norberto Bobbio. Translated and introduced by Allan Cameron.
University of Chicago Press, 1996
124 pp $14.95 paper

A SEEMINGLY OFFHAND personal note toward the end of this slim but remarkable volume of political theory conveys the earthy origins of an abstract egalitarian impulse. As the child of a bourgeois Italian family, Norberto Bobbio recalls how he would go to the country during summer holidays and play easily with the children of peasants:

> Our friendship was based upon a perfect understanding, and the class differences were completely irrelevant; but we could not help noticing the contrast between our houses and theirs, our food and theirs, and our clothes and theirs. . . . Every year when we started our holidays, we learnt that one of our playmates had died the previous winter from tuberculosis. I do not remember a single death among my school-friends in the city.

Now emeritus professor of legal and political philosophy at the University of Turin, an Italian senator, and a nonagenarian, Bobbio offers a compelling blueprint of the architecture of modern liberalism. But the primary aim of *Left and Right* is rather different and, if anything, more admirably successful: that is, to make a broad theoretical argument not for liberal egalitarianism or the left, but for ideology as such. Amazingly, *Left and Right* was the best-selling book in Italy in 1994, selling over two hundred thousand copies. Timing played an important part: the book's appearance coincided with the first bipolar election campaign in memory. But cogency and lucidity helped.

Confusion and ambiguity attend the concept of ideology. It was used originally by Destutt de Tracy and his followers in postrevolutionary France; later, with disdain by Napoleon; with elusive profundity by Marx and his followers; with renewed contempt by cold war anticommunists; with brilliance by George Lichtheim in a seminal essay rehearsing the complex career of this powerful but slippery idea. It has been used polemically by both left and right to disparage any belief system or orthodoxy that systematically blinds its adherents to certain presumed realities; and on the left it has also served as a wider, and more freighted, idea. According to Umberto Eco, ideology in this broad sense "constitutes a system of assumptions and expectations which interacts with the message and determines the selection of the code with which to read it."

But there is also a relatively unambiguous and neutral sense of "ideology"—Bobbio's sense: to identify the central axis of debate, and the shades of political value from left to right, in open societies, the very currency of democratic discourse. Much as Machiavelli assayed the use of brute power by sovereign princes in early modern city-states, Bobbio systematically explores the range and structure of the political spectrum. In doing so, he effectively demolishes a tendency, common in American political debate, to view ideology in this conventional sense, the continuum between "left" and "right," as exhausted, irrelevant, or otherwise defunct.

In this "end of ideology" supposition several dubious notions converge. There is Francis Fukuyama's neo-Hegelian idea that political history is over because liberal democracy has triumphed over communism; Daniel Bell's similar argument of a generation ago;

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and the proud (but naive) American tradition of pragmatism, which implies that neutral solutions can be found to political and scientific problems alike, and that no immutable values are at stake, least of all any based on class inequalities.

ILLUSIONS ALL. Even if liberal democracy has indeed triumphed once and for all over despotic government, collective or otherwise (and I think the smart money is elsewhere), the age of ideology isn't over, but rather coming into maturity. Despite these various anti-ideological currents, several historical constants generate polarized argument between competing moral-political visions. Certain debates must take place: if they do not (and frank discussion of class is glaringly absent from the American political conversation) they become silent fissures below unsteady ground. In a democratic and capitalist society—a society in which people have divergent interests and status, and the right to talk about and act upon them—politics inevitably focuses on conflicts over wider vs. narrower distribution of political and economic power: in short, on issues of equality.

"Left/right is not the only distinction in the political sphere," Bobbio writes, "but it is encountered everywhere." This is because virtually every significant political argument is about the relative importance of one or another form of equality: of political rights, of opportunity, of welfare, of dignity and toleration. The issues engaged include the distribution of wealth, the scope of government regulation to curb or offset the market, the desirability of class mobility and the acceptable means of achieving it, the power of labor vis à vis capital, the proper balance between public and private investment, and so forth. All are more or less parallel, and more or less permanent, features of the core debate about the demands of justice and the division of power and wealth. It would be hard to imagine a democratic political culture that did not ultimately revolve around such issues of equality, and competing positions advocating more or less of it, in more or less complex forms, and relative to one or another criterion for distributing goods and rewards. (Affirmative action, anyone? School vouchers?) The polarity of left and right endures because democratic politics is chiefly about equality, and the innumerable shades of opinion between two basic polar views. Bobbio writes:

> It is very difficult to know the complex origin of this fundamental choice. But it is precisely this conflict between fundamental choices which, in my opinion, characterizes so well the opposing camps which for a long time we have been in the habit of calling left and right: on the one hand, people who believe that human beings are more equal than unequal, and on the other, people who believe that we are more unequal than equal.

Here we might wish to add, or substitute, "ought to be" for "are." But if anything, Bobbio does not go far enough. A longer book, and perhaps a more tedious one, might have dwelt at greater length on the history and hollowness of contrary claims; or on the more interesting, but still flawed, view (of Anthony Giddens, among others) that we live in a "post-ideological" age. Bobbio might, for example, have elaborated on his claim that "The ideological tree is always green . . . there is nothing more ideological than declaring the demise of ideologies." In any case, the notion that this bipolar sense of ideology is archaic is put to rout.

Most serious conservatives are too sophisticated to make such arguments, even if they enjoy the rhetorical pretense that liberalism is defunct; they are themselves, after all, ideological stakeholders. The general American antipathy to ideological debate seems to echo the vaguely philistine centrism of the mass media, and especially of television, where commercial imperatives muffle controversy. But it's a complicated picture, and one that isn't free of contradictions. Many Americans, despite getting the bulk of their information and political socialization from television, are alienated from the media-driven political culture. One symptom of this is the recent popularity of talk radio, a more democratic (or at least more populist) medium, and a refuge for the anger and alienation—and often the bigotry—of its audience. Others join the democratic babble on the Internet; and some, despite a firm sense of morality, lack the political passions of the radio crowd or the cybernauts; for

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them, contempt for politics can translate into ideological illiteracy.

This is partly, perhaps, because politics itself is an essentially abstract framework for public morality—and Americans tend to abhor abstraction. But they also abhor any sort of claim against the individual, which is a profoundly ideological stance. (Here again, different senses of individualism must be distinguished: the Enlightenment and Jeffersonian idea, shared by modern liberals and conservatives, that only individuals, and not metaphysical phantasms, count in the end; and the more specifically American and libertarian individualism that exalts the isolated, anarchic self and is uniformly hostile to government.)

THE MASS media disdain ideology because it's abstract, complex, and can't be sold. Television is especially susceptible to the viral strain that evacuates politics of meaning and engagement, and equates it instead with spectacle and celebrity; so are the pages of the glossy magazines. But ideology persists despite those forms of institutional repression, because politics by definition embraces disagreement about individual ends and social purposes. It is a broad, but not an unbounded, universe. Political discourse must always allow for the new, the insightful, the imaginative; political questions can apply to art, science, the media, or virtually any other sector of public life. But they invariably return to basic questions about power and public life. In the democratic context, such questions are ideological.

I don't necessarily share Bobbio's certitude that equality is the ultimate foundation of the political spectrum. But that is not to contradict his thesis, only to suggest that there may be a deeper philosophical axis on which the left-right spectrum rests. Either way, Bobbio amply confirms the validity of that spectrum, and the importance of competing notions of equality to all democratic struggles.

Affirming that spectrum, and making the narrower case for the liberal view of equality, are the twin enterprises of *Left and Right*. Without offering strikingly original insights, and without scoring polemical points that would mar the force of his analysis, Bobbio makes his case so concisely and adroitly as to deserve the wide attention of egalitarians and their adversaries, not least in America. And it is hard to dispute his conclusion that "the left has not only not completed its task, it has hardly commenced it." ●

JEFFREY SCHEUER is writing a book about television and ideology, based on his essay in the Summer 1995 issue of *Dissent*.

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Against "Economic Naturalism"

James K. Galbraith

PLENTY OF NOTHING: THE DOWNSIZING OF THE AMERICAN DREAM AND THE CASE FOR STRUCTURAL KEYNESIANISM
by Thomas I. Palley
Princeton University Press, 1998 238 pp $27.95

THIS IS A good and useful book. At a time when mediocre economic performance is celebrated as though it were excellent, and when even the ugly consequences of mediocre performance, such as rising inequality, are commonly treated as though they were unavoidable by-products of progress, *Plenty of Nothing* is for people who are tired of being treated like fools. Thomas Palley's thesis, meticulously argued, is that we are not doing well. And by design. We are the victims of bad policy, whose brilliantly achieved purpose has been to enrich the few at the expense of the many.

Policy? According to the dominant economic thinking of our time, policy hardly matters. Independent causal force is assigned to the impersonal market, the agents behind the market are never mentioned, and the power of the government is, in large measure, denied. Students of our blighted subject are taught to reason in a counterfactual world, where businesses are competitive, ordinary people omniscient, and consumers sovereign. In such a world, societies are self-organizing, and governments are basically unneeded. It is a highbrow version of an ideology that we all recognize for what it is, when we hear it from Rush Limbaugh.

Palley calls this "economic naturalism," and he does not like it. "The failure to recognize that widespread prosperity rests on appropriately designed market rules and regulations," he writes with a touch of melodrama, "is the cancer that is killing the American dream." To function effectively, markets require governments; markets without governments are no more likely to succeed than governments without markets. The revolutionary thought that policy does matter, for good or evil, is a prime contribution of this book, though it is a mark of the degraded state of economic discourse that this argument is necessary at all.

At the core of Palley's reasoning lies a very simple, clear, and luminous metaphor. This is the prisoners' dilemma, a recurring motif for the failure of uncoordinated markets, the simplest demonstration that rational individuals acting separately in pursuit of pure self-interest can make themselves worse off. Every undergraduate in economics encounters the prisoners' dilemma sooner or later. But often, the presentation takes only its most abstract and hypothetical form: the case of two prisoners, interrogated separately and unable to collude, who are much more likely to implicate each other than to remain silent, in spite of the fact that both know that silence by both is the only way to assure that both defeat the interrogation.

Palley argues that prisoners' dilemmas are everywhere: in the stock bubble, the rat race, the wage-price spiral, the destruction of cities by suburban mall builders, the conduct of monetary policy, and the displacement of small and fuel-efficient cars by Chevrolet Suburbans. In each of these and a million other settings, indeed in the general case, perfect competition between rational individualists, even under ideal conditions, is not the way to the greatest happiness. It is, instead, the road to a ruin that only communication, coordination, and collective action can prevent.

The prisoners' dilemma is, in effect, a metaphor for the necessity of government.

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Governments must set the rules and structure the rewards, so that rational self-interest may produce positive rather than negative results. To the extent that the economics profession denies or downplays the necessary role of government, teaching the prisoners' dilemma to students while never explaining to them the full significance of the idea, it contradicts a central tenet of its own theoretical logic.

But of course, as Palley reminds us, there is a distinct difference between the economics suitable for undergraduates and the understanding of those who use the ignorance it spreads to obscure their own uses of power. And indeed, much of *Plenty of Nothing* is given over to a discussion of the actual uses of policy in our reactionary time—to preserve and protect the large industrial and financial corporation, to lower wages and obstruct trade unions, to open borders to the coercive migration of capital, and to suppress full employment.

FOR EACH OF these disorders, Palley offers suggestions for a cure. His approach may be described as classically Keynesian, an approach that remains the coherent practical alternative to economic reaction. Palley fully subscribes to the core Keynesian proposition, which is that adequate effective demand and full employment are the essential commitments government must make to its economic citizens, and that from the achievement of these goals virtually every other progressive policy objective must follow.

But Palley goes beyond this core element of Keynesianism, and devotes considerable attention to the coordination problem that justifies government intervention in a much larger spectrum of economic activity. "Structural Keynesianism"—a pragmatic blend of rule setting with attention to macroeconomic fundamentals—is Palley's basic formula for achieving this purpose. To generalize broadly, Palley argues that successful policy making requires both a commitment to the larger goal of full employment by the policy maker, and a respect by ordinary economic actors for the limits of their own gains from the policy—in other words, a willingness to share. Since rational self-interest and the competitive spirit undermine the willingness to share, Palley's argument is, in effect, that institutions, norms, and laws promoting social solidarity, coordination, and regulation are indispensable if Keynesian policy is to be made to work.

Plenty of Nothing presents many vignettes on the relationship between structural reform of policy-making institutions and changes in policy implementation that should be on the progressive agenda; Palley's detailed opposition to the deficit fetishism that dominates fiscal policy and to the inflation fetishism that dominates monetary policy are both necessary reading and lead to generally sensible suggestions for reform, especially of the Federal Reserve Board. Palley also offers a clear debunking of the hypothesis of "twin deficits"—the notion, rendered entirely naked by recent events, that rising government deficits are necessarily associated with rising trade deficits and vice versa.

International trade is the most troubling area for the application of the Palley doctrines. Coordination can only work, Palley argues, among parties that are subject to the same large body of law and that share similar objectives. This, he says, is the case between developed nations, and so trade in the framework of a common market can be free. But, Palley argues, trade between rich and poor countries lacks this character; it is instead characterized by "systems competition." North-South trade therefore serves to undermine the achievement of collective goals, certainly within the wealthier partners and perhaps on both sides of the transaction.

THIS IS in effect an argument—going far beyond the more conventional case for international labor standards—for restricting the importation of manufactured products from poor countries. It is also, by extension, an argument against the sale of advanced capital equipment to such countries. Palley seems to be saying that if the United States cuts off Indonesia from access to our markets for, say, Nike shoes, then we will be better off, not because we gain from protection as such but because we will then be able to pursue a full- employment strategy that would otherwise be denied us, and that the loss of sales to Boeing and IBM will be com-

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pensated by the rebirth of high-wage consumer-goods production on American soil.

There is a corresponding case that Indonesia might also become better off in a less globalized world. Without the protection of foreign capital, the regime and even the army might lose their grip on power. Good things could result, in the form of national production of lower-quality products more suitable for domestic consumption. Indonesian children might eventually get adequate shoes; they don't get them now.

MAYBE. There is a logic to Palley's argument, contrary though it is to the standard arguments for comparative advantage and specialization through trade. One might note that John Maynard Keynes, a relentless logician, reached the same conclusion during the Great Depression when the paramount objective was to achieve conditions for the success of a demand policy to increase employment. It is hard to accept the larger applicability of the prisoners' dilemma, and yet draw the line at the level of interaction between nation-states.

Still, speaking personally, I lack the stomach for this hard game. I fear that the genie of globalization cannot be returned to its bottle—not without ushering in an apocalypse in the developing world if the American market were suddenly shut. For this reason, I would rather stay focused on what might be achieved through international policy coordination and global Keynesianism, combined with a fair measure of open trade. So long as we are pipe dreaming, I'd at least start by reforming the Federal Reserve and the International Monetary Fund. ●

JAMES K. GALBRAITH teaches economics at the LBJ School of Public Affairs, the University of Texas at Austin. His next book, *Created Unequal: The Crisis in American Pay*, will be published in August by the Free Press.

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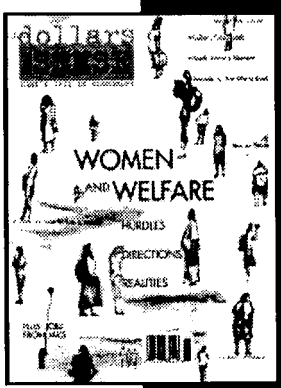

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Where Have All the French Intellectuals Gone?

Richard Wolin

JACQUES LACAN
by Elisabeth Roudinesco
Columbia University Press, 1997 574 pp $36.95

ETHICS: SUBJECTIVITY AND TRUTH
by Michel Foucault, ed. Paul Rabinow
The New Press, 1997 334 pp $30

EDGAR MORIN:
FROM BIG BROTHER TO FRATERNITY
by Myron Kofman
Pluto Press, 1996 152 pp $14.95

For some time time now it has been fashionable to bemoan the end of the age of the great French intellectuals. In the early 1980s, Sartre, Barthes, Lévi-Strauss, and Foucault all passed from the scene. Louis Althusser experienced a metaphorical death: after strangling his wife, he was found incompetent to stand trial and institutionalized for many years until his actual death (at home) in 1991. Jacques Lacan, a figure who towered over the French psychoanalytic establishment for three decades, and who is often ranked alongside these master thinkers, died in August 1981.

Lacan has been the subject of countless biographies. Most follow the standard hagiographic lines established by the master himself and perpetuated by his intellectual heirs. Elisabeth Roudinesco, herself a Lacanian analyst and the author of the standard two-volume history of the French psychoanalytic movement, *La Bataille de cent ans* (the second volume has been translated into English as *Jacques Lacan & Co.*), departs from the hagiographic model. Her research is exhaustive and breaks entirely new ground. When it first appeared in France in 1993, it created no small stir: the French are still relatively unaccustomed to acknowledging that their beloved intellectuals have feet of clay—and then some. Her study is an important one insofar as it chronicles the grandeur and delusions not only of Lacan himself, but of an entire generation of French analysts and intellectuals who succumbed to his mesmerizing influence.

Born in 1901, Lacan was a member of the "lost generation" that came of age during the interwar years. At the time Freud's ideas were beginning to gain a foothold in France—not only among the psychiatric establishment, but also, due to the surrealist rehabilitation of the unconscious, among the Parisian bohemian literati as well. As psychoanalysts began to flee Nazi-dominated Central Europe, a few of Freud's followers found their way to Paris. Among the most prominent was Rudolph Loewenstein, a proponent of ego psychology who would become Lacan's training analyst.

Lacan's conception of a "return to Freud," in which the unconscious was restored to its central role, was developed in polemical contrast to Loewenstein's approach. In Lacan's view, Freud's émigré followers were the real heretics, insofar as they departed from the depth-psychological orientation of Freud's theory of the instincts, emphasizing instead the centrality of the ego. For Lacan, this view represented a betrayal of the radical implications of Freud's original doctrine.

Predictably, Lacan's analysis with Loewenstein proved anything but smooth. After six years, Lacan seized upon a pretext to break it off. Nevertheless, the Parisian Psychoanalytic Society, sensing that in Lacan they had a wunderkind, awarded him the status of training analyst. Thus the man who for three decades would reign as France's leading train-

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ing analyst never completed his own analysis.

Lacan's worldview was shaped during the 1930s, the so-called hollow years. It was a decade of constant political tumult, punctuated by frequent changes of government, a failed right-wing coup attempt, a rising Nazi threat, the growth of an internal fascist menace, the ignominy of Munich and Vichy. The decade's reigning assumption was that the life span of liberal democracy in Europe was exhausted, that the spirit of progress and Enlightenment had played itself out. The time had come to embrace the demons that lurked beneath the veneer of civilized respectability. This apocalyptic mood was reflected in the intellectual fashions of the day: Alexandre Kojève's theory of the "end of history," Georges Bataille's glorification of tribal communities, Martin Heidegger's portentous philosophical hymns to Being. Lacan's great feat was to imbibe these currents, according them legitimacy within the influential framework of French psychoanalytic circles. In this context, Freud's doctrine of the unconscious—his heretical claim that the human ego or consciousness, far from being master of its own household, was a mere plaything of underlying forces—seemed predestined for a great career.

Out of this background emerged the rich and baffling psychoanalytic doctrine known as Lacanianism. The concept of the "mirror stage"—crucial to the formation of the infant's self—dates from the 1930s. But most of Lacan's other innovations—above all, his notions of the "symbolic" and "imaginary" stages of development—date from the 1950s. According to Lacan, the symbolic stage coincides with the child's acquisition of language, an event that also signals the onset of socialization. Lacan's concept of the imaginary refers to the intrinsic falsifications of the self that coincide with the construction of the ego.

With this conceptual armature, Lacan attempted to deliver his final assault against ego psychology and what he disparagingly referred to as the "Americanization of psychoanalysis." Lacan had arrived at the iconoclastic (and rather un-Freudian) conclusion that the ego was in essence an agent of dissimulation and deception, of narcissistic resistance to the voice of the unconscious. Yet, as Roudinesco points out, Lacan's criticisms of the ego and its elaborate deceptions and defense mechanisms stopped at home. They never seemed to figure in his own self-analysis.

Lacan's notoriety derived not only from his revolutionary refashioning of psychoanalytic theory—accomplished in the name of a "return to Freud"; it also stemmed from his revision of psychoanalytic technique. His most controversial innovation was his employment of so-called short sessions. Early on in his career Lacan perceived the classical psychoanalytic hour (already clipped to forty-five minutes) as an unacceptable obstacle to the number of patients he could see per week. Especially galling to him was the fact that it limited the number of training analyses he could pursue. For someone intent on seeding the French psychoanalytic scene with his own intellectual and clinical progeny, such limitations seemed intolerable.

Initially, Lacan drew the line at twenty minutes. This landed him in hot water with the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA), which refused to accept Lacan-trained analysts as a result of the Master's unorthodox practices. In 1963, Lacan and most other members of the French Psychoanalytic Society were expelled from the IPA outright. (Roudinesco's insinuations of IPA small-mindedness in this connection fail to convince.) But toward the end of Lacan's clinical career, even twenty minutes seemed too restrictive; by then the sessions had shrunk to an average of five minutes. That Lacan's fellow analysts and patients continued to justify such practices, claiming that unpredictable session length greatly enhanced one's power to "free associate," offers pathetic insight concerning the uncritical reverence with which even his most far-fetched ideas were viewed.

Of course, there were distinct pecuniary advantages to such practices. Lacan's fondness for rare books, antiques, objets d'art, and surrealist painting were well known. He could hardly be expected to support such tastes on an analyst's income alone. According to Roudinesco, during the final two years of his practice, Lacan saw an average of ten patients

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an hour. She estimates that he earned approximately four million francs a year from his practice—close to $2 million in 1998 dollars. Upon his death in 1981, Lacan had four bank accounts, three Paris apartments, and a sumptuous home in the country.

One of the strengths of Roudinesco's book is the facility with which she integrates Lacan's biographical idiosyncrasies within a broader French cultural tapestry. And it would be a severe disappointment if, in a biography of this scale, full due were not given to Lacan's legendary personality quirks.

In 1934 Lacan married Marie-Louise Blondin. Predictably, the bourgeois institution of marriage soon proved too restrictive for Lacan, whom Roudinesco describes as "polygamous by nature." On his honeymoon Lacan sent telegrams to a former girlfriend. Several years later, Lacan began a long-term affair with Georges Bataille's actress wife, Sylvia. In 1941 Sylvia Bataille gave birth to a daughter by Lacan, Judith.

Throughout these years, Lacan lived a bizarre double life. With his first family (he would have three other children with Marie-Louise Blondin) he maintained a fiction of domestic tranquility. Though he would marry Sylvia Bataille in 1953, until the mid-1950s he concealed from the three children of his first marriage the fact that they had a half-sister.

Nor was Lacan adept at observing traditional Freudian strictures against using transference to his own libidinal advantage. In one well-known case in which he had fallen in love with a patient's daughter whom he refused to stop seeing, the patient committed suicide. Roudinesco tries to minimize the body count among Lacan's patients—several took their own lives—contending that the suicides reflected the type of borderline patient Lacan was willing to see rather than his shortcomings as an analyst. One wonders.

Toward the end of his life, Lacan presented something of a sad spectacle. Having earlier declared the "real" (the true facts of one's life, as it were) to be unreachable, he now tried to gain access to it through mystical means. He became obsessed with "Borromean knots"—made of rope that supposedly originated from the mythical planet Borromeo. Convinced that they were the path through which one might unlock the secrets of reality, he exchanged information about their hidden properties with a group of intimates.

In his seminars and his analytic sessions, Lacan ceased to speak. Instead, he would enter the room and, childlike, begin playing with his knots. His admirers were convinced that such behavior was an expression of his genius.

One of the highlights of Roudinesco's narrative concerns a trip Lacan made to the United States in 1975, at the beginning of his Borromean phase. In Cambridge, he addressed an audience of MIT linguists, eager to learn what words of wisdom France's psychoanalytic guru might have to dispense. To a question from Noam Chomsky concerning cognitive process, Lacan had the following to say: "We think we think with our brains; personally, I think with my feet. That's the only way I really come into contact with anything solid. I do occasionally think with my forehead, when I bang into something. But I've seen enough electroencephalograms to know there's not the slightest trace of a thought in the brain." The audience was stupefied. Apparently none of them had yet seen the light emanating from planet Borromeo.

THE FIRST of a projected three-volume collection of Michel Foucault's essential works, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* provides a wonderful *entrée* to Foucault's otherwise difficult oeuvre. The work is divided into two parts. Part I reproduces the course summaries that Foucault was required to provide for his annual lectures at the Collège de France. Part II contains interviews and short works from Foucault's final years. Although some of these texts have already appeared in English, the translations were in many cases defective, wrongs that have now been set right.

The course summaries are valuable insofar as they demonstrate the way Foucault's research interests changed during the last decade and a half of his life. Many of the themes will be familiar to Foucault's readers. For the most part they pertain to his reconceptualization of "power," which has been so influential in the areas of history, social theory, and liter-

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ary criticism. In the early course summaries Foucault's neo-Nietzschean pairing of power and knowledge occupies pride of place. In a rebuff to the Enlightenment view of knowledge as something that will ultimately set us free, Foucault claims that systems of thought are always implicated in the reproduction of power relations. Just as Nietzsche spoke of the "will to power" as the hidden motivation underlying all human pursuits, even the most sublime—religion, philosophy, and so forth—Foucault invokes the "will to knowledge" to characterize the nefarious and inescapable entwinement of reasoning and social power. From there it is but a short step to his depiction of modernity *tout court* as a "punitive" or "carceral" society, in which disciplinary practices predominate at all levels.

If the reign of power-knowledge and the "punitive society" is indeed as total as Foucault leads us to believe, are there any prospects for escape? This question seems especially relevant insofar as Foucault had ruled out the fashionable 1960s discourse of "emancipation" (Reich, Marcuse, and other representatives of the Freudian left) which in his view remained beholden to traditional ideals of identity and coherence.

It may come as a surprise to many that, according to Foucault, power is never as totalizing as it may appear on first view: it inevitably breeds opposition and resistance. As the philosopher observes:

> Even when the power relation is completely out of balance, when it can truly be claimed that one side has "total power" over the other, a power can be exercised over the other only insofar as the other still has the option of killing himself, of leaping out the window, or of killing the other person. This means that in power relations there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there were no possibility of resistance (of violent resistance, flight, deception, strategies capable of reversing the situation), there would be no power relations at all. . . . To take what is undoubtedly a very simplified example, one cannot say that it was only men who wielded power in the conventional marital structure of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; women had quite a few options: they could deceive their husbands, pilfer money from them, refuse them sex.

Yet, to judge from the foregoing example, one suspects that Foucault abandoned too quickly the ideal of political emancipation: all the instances of resistance he invokes allow the relationship of domination in question to remain structurally intact.

Toward the end of the course summaries, Foucault changes his focus dramatically. He departs from his characteristic concern with modes of subjugation and instead concentrates on "ethics." Specifically, he is concerned with pre-Christian forms of individuation, where the ideal of self-mastery is not yet tied to modern methods of self-renunciation or "normalization." Instead, they are concerned with what Foucault calls an "aesthetics of existence"—the "choice of a beautiful life." In the Hellenistic world, observes Foucault, "It is a matter of the formation of the self through techniques of living, not of repression through prohibition and law." At issue is a proliferation of "acts and pleasures" instead of the Western-Christian obsession with the strict regulation of "desire." In these pre-Christian, pagan contexts self-control was devoted to the ends of *living to the utmost*—"Marcus Aurelius was thinking of that when he wrote that 'moral perfection requires that one spend each day as if it were the last,'" observes Foucault—rather than those of self-abnegation.

In the interviews contained in part II, Foucault reflects further on the methodological implications of his work. But of at least equal interest are his candid remarks about the relationship between his research interests and his personal life. A 1982 interview, for example, contains the following stark confession:

> I am really not a good academic. For me, intellectual work is related to what you could call 'aestheticism,' meaning transforming yourself. . . . I know that knowledge can tranform us, that truth is not only a way of deciphering the world, but that if I know the truth I will be changed. And maybe I will be saved. . . .You see, that's why I really work like a dog, and I worked like a dog all my life. I am not interested in the academic status of what I am doing because my problem is my

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> own transformation. . . . The transformation of one's self by one's own knowledge is, I think, something rather close to aesthetic experience. Why should a painter work if he is not transformed by his own painting?

It seems that toward the end of his life Foucault experienced a change of heart concerning a number of matters of fundamental intellectual significance. His attitude toward the Enlightenment changed. No longer did he associate it, as in his writings of the 1970s, with the emergence of a "carceralism" or a disciplinary sensibility. Instead, he viewed it, constructively, as an epoch in which systematic reflection on the historical present and the possibilities it contained first took hold. In "What is Enlightenment?" Kant, who in *The Order of Things* had been denigrated as a progenitor of the pernicious "sciences of man," comes in for a favorable reassessment. The work of Jürgen Habermas, an intrepid defender of Enlightenment reason and the "unfinished project of modernity," is also sympathetically treated. While expressing skepticism about Habermas's utopian ideal of communication free of domination, Foucault observes in a spirit of conciliation: "I am quite interested in his work, although I know he completely disagrees with my views." Even his earlier suspicions of "rule of law" and the "rights of man" as normative, hence normalizing, constructs underwent a thoughtful reevaluation. Sounding like a human rights advocate and a convert to the Socratic spirit, he waxes lyrical about "ethical concerns and the political struggle for the respect of rights, of critical thought against abusive techniques of government and research in ethics that seeks to ground individual freedom." If only Foucault had lived long enough to translate such tantalizing insights into a fully developed research program.

EDGAR MORIN is one of France's more fascinating intellectual mavericks. His work is little known outside of French intellectual circles, and Myron Kofman's *Edgar Morin: From Big Brother to Fraternity* is a useful introduction to a representative, if complex, intellectual odyssey that has spanned five decades.

Born in 1922, Morin was expelled from the French Communist Party in 1951 for publishing an article on Trotsky. In 1956, the year of Khrushchev's Twentieth Party Congress Speech and the Soviet invasion of Hungary, he cofounded the anti-Stalinist political review *Arguments*. His co-editors were the leading lights of a dissident French Marxism with a Lukàcsian, *autogestionniste* slant: former *résistants* Kostas Axelos and Henri Lefebvre, as well as for a time Roland Barthes.

Arguments folded in 1962. Ultimately, however, it played a pivotal role in the development of the French New Left. By jettisoning inherited Stalinist orthodoxies, its editors were able to expose the French left to an unprecedented range of themes. Along with *Socialism or Barbarism* (led by Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort, who also contributed regularly to *Arguments*) and the Situationist International, the kind of cultural or philosophical Marxism developed in *Arguments* provided the theoretical inspiration for May '68.

The standpoint of *Arguments* was resolutely undogmatic, its criticisms of the reigning forms of bureaucratic communism relentless. Nor were the oppressive features of postwar capitalism—consumerism, advertising, French colonialism—spared. Like the Frankfurt School, Morin and company explored the hidden relationship between Marxism and psychoanalysis. Through the contributions of Lefebvre, *Arguments* introduced the idea of a "critique of everyday life." Renegade concepts such as "post-Marxism" were freely bandied about. In this respect Morin and his associates were certainly influenced by the renaissance of existential Marxism facilitated by Sartre and *Les Temps modernes*; but the unorthodox Marxism of the *Arguments* group went even further. Entire issues of the journal were devoted to heretical topics such as "The Problem of Love" and "The Problem of Cosmology."

The *Arguments* group was able to address a range of important cultural themes that helped update Marxist thought in light of the changing nature of postwar capitalist society. They were among the first on the French left to understand that the traditional Marxist

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recipe for social revolution, based on the thesis of proletarian immiseration, was no longer tenable. They recognized that the industrial base of the French working class was shrinking, and that workers themselves were becoming more integrated, more bourgeois. Hence, the phenomenon of "alienation" could no longer be understood in the traditional Marxist idiom of mass impoverishment. Instead, in an age of unprecedented working-class affluence, it needed to be conceptualized "psychologically": in terms of lost capacities for self-fulfillment and self-realization. Here, Sartre's theory of authenticity played a key role. As Morin would remark: "the petty-bourgeois life of comfort becomes a passive life of play with dreams, pastimes, distractions; the great technical adventure requires an active life of play where man, becoming aware of just this adventure, attempts *to live*."

At the same time, the risks of this new "cultural Marxism" were also apparent. The further it departed from its socialist roots, the more it threatened to turn into a type of trendy "lifestyle Marxism." The trajectory of Morin's later intellectual course well illustrates this dilemma.

The emancipatory ideals that had animated Morin's youth always remained keen. The problem, however, was that it became increasingly difficult to find a suitable political vehicle through which they might be realized, especially once it had become clear that the prospects of reforming Marxism from within were negligible. In 1968 Morin, along with Castoriadis and Lefort, co-authored *La Brèche*, a May '68 postmortem, which celebrated the anarchistic energies that the movement had unleashed. The following year, however, the Pompidou-led Gaullists enjoyed a resounding electoral victory, and May seemed a distant memory. Morin traveled to California, where he underwent a conversion to the biological anarchism that would mark his post-'68 writings on science and society. Thereafter, his thought would revolve around the manichean conceptual opposition between "order and disorder," which he came to associate with the political divide between right and left. Whereas the right sought to repress disorder in the name of logic, authority, and the state, the left, by embracing chaos and complexity, sought to further the ends of anarchistic freedom.

Few on the established political left found much in Morin's ideas with which they could identify. Increasingly, Morin himself turned away from everyday politics. He had become convinced that political problems were a mere subset of broader ecological and cosmic themes. His trilogy on "method"—distinguished by titles such as *The Nature of Nature, The Life of Life*, and *The Knowledge of Knowledge*—appeared in the early 1980s. His arguments became increasingly esoteric, speculative, and cluttered with fanciful neologisms: "chaosmos," "computo," *asservissement*.

Morin remains a sympathetic figure whose intellectual and political good faith has never been in doubt. As far as the ultimate serviceability of his ideas and theoretical legacy is concerned, a healthy skepticism would be in order.

WHERE HAVE all the French intellectuals gone? It seems that the age of intellectual stars on the order of Sartre, Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, and Foucault is indeed over. There are historical reasons that help explain the decline of France's master thinkers. The next generation of French philosophers—the poststructuralists—seeking to make an absolute break with the norms of bourgeois society, staked their reputations on the concept of "antihumanism." They were, one might say, philosophically successful; but politically speaking their approach proved disastrous. During the 1970s and 1980s, when the rest of the world was rediscovering the importance of human rights, civil liberties, and the values of an "open society," France's avant-garde was left out of the conversation. And given the vehemence with which they had deconstructed the shibboleths of liberalism ("man," "the subject," and so on), there was little hope that they might recoup their losses. Instead, they were succeeded by a new generation of neoliberal thinkers (Alain Finkielkraut, Luc Ferry, Alain Renaut) who were politically respectable but intellectually unexceptional. Only by sacrificing the intellectual radicalism of its master thinkers was France able to reenter the discourse of contemporary democracy. ●

RICHARD WOLIN teaches European intellectual history at Rice University.

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Under the Skin

Edward T. Chase

A COUNTRY OF STRANGERS:
BLACKS AND WHITES IN AMERICA
by David K. Shipler
Alfred A. Knopf, 1997 607 pp $30

THE SITUATION of African Americans is so complex that one is tempted to remark that chaos theoreticians are needed to diagnose it. For instance, Professor John J. DiIulio of Princeton, echoing data from Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom's *America in Black and White*, deems the plight of the approximately one-quarter of the total black population that subsists in the inner-city slums "morally unbearable," yet points out that in the past six years black home-ownership has been increasing at about twice the rate of white home-ownership. And although the percentage of black households below the official poverty line is double the percentage of all U.S. households, the 28.4 percent figure is nevertheless the lowest since statistics were first kept, in 1955. Indeed, the annual personal income of U.S. blacks has increased steadily since 1980. But any note of optimism that might be drawn from this last statistic should be qualified by the distinction, made by David Shipler in his new book, that the crucial economic disparity between the races is not the gap in income but in the gap in family net worth—"the savings and property that represent a cumulative history spanning generations." The median net worth today for whites is $43,000, for blacks $3,700.

Because American society is still so deeply marked by racial inequality, affirmative action dominates our agenda of domestic issues. Back in 1992, political scientist Andrew Hacker demonstrated the apartheid caste-system character of America's racially divided society in his best-selling *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal*. Hacker, while profoundly pessimistic about the future of integration, nonetheless has remained a supporter of affirmative action. More recently, Abigail and Stephen Thernstrom's *America in Black and White: One Nation, Indivisible: Race in Modern America* (which deliberately took dead aim at Hacker even in its title) decried affirmative action as unneeded, even a deterrent to progress. "We urge color-blind public policies," the Thernstroms write. "Race-conscious policies make for more race-consciousness; they carry America backward. We have a simple rule of thumb: that which brings the races together is good; that which divides us is bad."

David Shipler's beautifully written new book, *A Country of Strangers: Blacks and Whites in America*, for all its acute sensitivity, its carefully nuanced generalizations, and its conscientious effort to range far and wide in documenting interracial perceptions and interactions, is not much help. The book is well worth reading, but it is finally undermined by its own caution.

Shipler has interviewed innumerable ordinary Americans, black and white, to dissect the stereotypes that dominate Americans' attitudes about race. Shipler is a model of evenhandedness. This will come as no surprise to readers of his earlier books on Vietnam, Russia, and Israel. His book is admirably concrete, with the explicitness that good reportage provides. If there is a bottom line to his long book, it is in his title, from the comment: "Everywhere I have looked, I have seen a country where blacks and whites are strangers to each other."

In the course of the book, Shipler gives us informative discussions of several experiments in racial understanding. For example, he pro-

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vides a heartening analysis of Oak Park, the deliberately integrated, oasislike Illinois town that is bordered on two sides by Chicago's black slums. Besides being a haven for biracial couples, Oak Park has managed to enact effective antidiscrimination laws and to convince the real estate people that integration would best serve their long-term interest. He offers a more depressing view of the effort to foster interracial tolerance after the strife between blacks and Jews in Brooklyn's Crown Heights. He describes these efforts as failures; they remind him of similarly unsuccessful trust-building projects between Jew and Arab while he was a correspondent in Israel.

Shipler's extensive treatment of affirmative action is sophisticated; that is, while he defines its importance, he also faithfully records the sentiment of dissenters. He is cautious. "In the end managing prejudice becomes a very personal task. Yet it can be facilitated by institutional mechanisms," he writes. A bit further on, he adds: "Affirmative action has surely smoothed the path of upwardly mobile blacks into the middle class . . . but it has also left behind a massive, impoverished class of African Americans trapped in urban neighborhoods of crime and decay."

Despite its many virtues, the book finally becomes wearisome; the reader is surfeited with anecdotes, skillfully told but all too often reflective of commonplaces and "insights" now so familiar to even the thinly read that they add little to one's understanding. Shipler writes that "things are getting better and worse at the same time. Racially, America is torn by the crosscurrents of progress and decay. Practically every step forward is accompanied by a subtle erosion of the ground beneath."

PERHAPS THE absence of remedial policies was Shipler's deliberate strategy. For his liberal stance is manifest enough—he shows that a nation of two alienated societies is unacceptable. But even so, the author's absence of prescriptions for change leaves an unwelcome hollow feeling. Shipler is a careful reporter, but he breaks little new ground.

Only at a few points does Shipler break loose from his soberly calibrated style. In irritation over the reluctance of university deans to provide a candid acknowledgment of "how colleges and graduate schools increase the number of African Americans in their ranks," Shipler asks: "But why not? How shameful can it be, after generations of imprisonment in inferior educational dys-systems, to score lower on a standardized test? How unfair can it be, after three hundred years of white advantage, to spend thirty years redressing the imbalance? And how unwise can it be, after failing to tap the resources of black America, to reach affirmatively past the sterile test scores into a rich human potential not easily measured?" He here terms affirmative action "a badge of honor."

It is only fair here that I should declare my unchanging conviction, the Thernstroms to the contrary, that Hacker and Shipler are correct on the evidence and arguments. This conviction prompted me, as his book editor, to pressure Hacker to write *Two Nations*. I had read the book he wrote in 1964 for the Fund for the Republic, in which he anticipated that technology would render blacks "unneeded, a society of losers." Legally sanctioned racial oppression of blacks was common in 1964, and pervasive degradation still sullies the lives of inner-city blacks. As Hacker argues, and as Shipler points out in a more muted tone, affirmative action continues to combat those conditions.

In writing one of the earliest pieces on affirmative action, in 1964, I referred to the "doctrine of compensation," which held that America must atttempt to make up for three hundred and fifty years of discrimination. My article, written for *Commonweal*, was reprinted by the National Urban League and given wide circulation—yet the *New York Times* denounced the compensation doctrine as "un-American."

The term "quota" still carries a stigma, evoking the notion of a process whereby unqualified minorities are shoehorned into jobs denied better qualified whites. In fact, Shipler shows, such an outcome is an extreme rarity. And in any event today's set-asides for minority employment and generalized outreach efforts do not entail mathematical quotas. Interestingly, most big business firms look favorably upon affirmative action as a productive,

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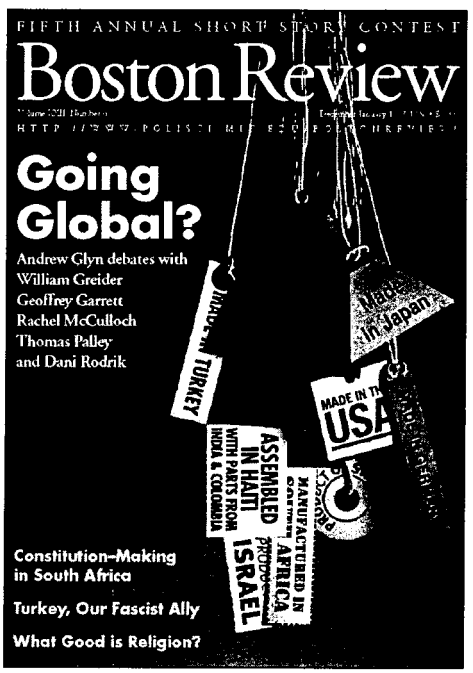
stabilizing practice, and the very best of our universities are adamant in pursuing diversity of student body and faculty.

The breaking sea change today, bound profoundly to affect our "country of strangers" but not mentioned in Shipler's book, is the revolution in welfare policy and in the health care system. Proportionately, African Americans will be "impacted," to use the popular barbarism, on a major scale by these two new developments. Early in the going we know of substantial drop-offs from the welfare rolls and some concomitant efforts to provide day care facilities for working mothers and for transportation to suburban jobs. And on the health care front, while forty-one million people are still uninsured at any given time, the rising disenchantment with HMOs (or RHOs—"Rationed Health Organizations") may seed the ground for the ultimate establishment of a universal federal single-payer system like Medicare, the famously successful model.

We can only hope that a new social contract will emerge under the impact of these two factors, radically to affect society's lowest quintile in income and assets. Affirmative action, "preferential hiring," outreach for diversity, and set-asides cannot rescue Hacker's bottom-caste "losers," but some form of guaranteed make-work à la the old WPA, devices to provide what William Julius Wilson deems the sine qua non, work, will eventuate to replace the old welfare systems and to rescue those still ineligible for Medicaid. As the Thernstroms' vast statistical research divulges, American society is never inert. The very conditions affecting race that Shipler so subtly and sensitively describes contain the dynamics of social change. ●

EDWARD T. CHASE, a contributor to *Dissent* in the 1960s, is the former editor-in-chief of New York Times Books and of The New American Library.



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The Communist Manifesto

Editors:

To my mind there is one glaring omission in Shlomo Avineri's brilliant discussion of "The Communist Manifesto at 150" (Winter 1998). Nowhere is there any reference to Eduard Bernstein's revisionist Marxism, which as spelled out in Bernstein's 1898 book *Evolutionary Socialism* and elsewhere, is very close to Avineri's own critique of the Manichaean aspect of Marxism that has beclouded its many penetrating and enduring insights.

Had Bernstein's views triumphed in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century social democratic movement, that movement might today in many ways quite closely resemble the model proposed in Michael Walzer's excellent "Pluralism and Social Democracy" (Winter 1998).

STUART E. COLIE
Ocean Springs, Miss.

Save Social Security

Editors:

In "The HMO Revolution" (Spring 1998), Rashi Fein described the worsening health care situation in the United States, determined as it is largely by for-profit organizations.

The cause of the misery is the failure of the Clinton administration to grasp the unique opportunity of 1992, when, with control of both houses of Congress, it failed to concentrate its efforts on passing a universal health plan. Instead, its real effort went to pushing NAFTA through. The results will haunt us for a long time.

Although the HMO situation remains gloomy, there is hope for improvement in the related question of Social Security, related via Medicare, even in the current political environment. That possibility is connected with the taxation of Social Security benefits.

Social Security benefits ultimately derive from the regressive Social Security tax; because the system is indispensable, we put up with its regressive character. But when benefits are taxed, depending on income level, the proceeds are diverted to the government's general fund—a clear substitution of a regressive tax for the more-or-less progressive income tax. The solution is as clear as its is fair: return taxes derived from Social Security benefits to the Social Security fund. Besides correcting an outrageous situation, the change would secure Social Security's future, even undermining much of the corrosive cynicism connected with that future.

JOSEPH M. DIAMOND
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Erratum

We regret that a proofreading error led us to put Jeffrey Herf (Letters, Spring 1998) in Oxford, Ohio rather than Athens, Ohio, where he teaches in the history department of Ohio University.

IN MEMORIAM

To a Long-Distance Runner
Saul Mendelson
1917-1998

Carl & Marion Shier

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On July 2, 1977, a seventeen-year-old boy set fire to an abandoned tenement building on New York City's Lower East Side. This fire was just a flicker in an enormous mid-1970s arson wave that struck New York's poorest neighborhoods; it is remembered today only because a young firefighter named Marty Celic fell to his death as the building collapsed.

Today the site, on East Eighth Street between Avenue C and Avenue D, is the home of a flourishing community garden named in Celic's memory. A couple of dozen individual plots of flowers, herbs, and vegetables surround a large common green. The garden, which is maintained entirely by neighborhood residents, was born as a wildcat operation in the years after the arson; Ladder Company 18, where Celic served, has given substantial support. The project was given the city's official blessing and protection, under a program called "Operation Green Thumb," in 1988.

This past May, City Hall transferred jurisdiction of the Marty Celic Memorial Garden, and 740 other community gardens throughout New York, from the Parks Department to the Department of Housing Preservation and Development—with the mandate that they be auctioned off to housing developers. A decade ago, the notion that for-profit developers might be interested in the Celic site would have seemed absurd. But today the East Village's yuppie/boho population is burgeoning, and pushing ever eastward.

At the Celic Garden's Memorial Day barbecue, which drew well over a hundred people, the new threat to community gardening was on the minds of many. "New York definitely needs more green," said one man. "Look at these kids running around—do you think they have space to do that in their apartments?"

What should be said about the Lower East Side's community gardens in the pages of *Dissent*? Not that they've made a serious dent in the neighborhood's injustices: crime may be down, but poverty, unemployment, and wasted potential are still the main story on the Celic Garden's block. And certainly not that they're oases of human solidarity and participatory democracy: a visit to an Avenue B garden found two of its leaders squabbling interminably about who should reimburse whom for bake-sale expenses.

But the gardens are beautiful; they give the city desperately needed green space; they allow citizens to work on collective projects that aren't directly regulated by the government or by the market; and most of them bring together people of different classes and races, and thus make the city seem a little bit less like a terrifying caste society.

And we should also say this: the Giuliani adminstration's efforts to wipe out the gardens give the lie to the conventional wisdom about urban policy. The bad old days of modernist urban planning, we're told, have given way to a new center-right consensus. This new consensus is said to be far more sensitive to the insights of Jane Jacobs—much more willing, that is, to allow private-sector citizen initiatives, in all their chaotic diversity, to bubble up from below.

The center-left urban planning of the postwar years *did* leave a lot to be desired (and this magazine was not immune to its ethos—early issues of *Dissent* were full of calls to "tear down the slums"). But if Rudolph Giuliani has his way, and the city's gardens are destroyed to make way for private housing, we'll learn once again that the free market can be just as unkind to civil society—just as insensitive to the chaotic forms that bring neighborhoods to life—as any Olympian urban designer. (And not even the architecture will improve: if recently built East Village yuppie apartments are any indication, the new buildings that replace the gardens will be at least as ugly as any Eisenhower-era public housing.) Giuliani's team may believe that it's striking a blow for freedom and civility, but the residents of Eighth Street know better.

David Glenn

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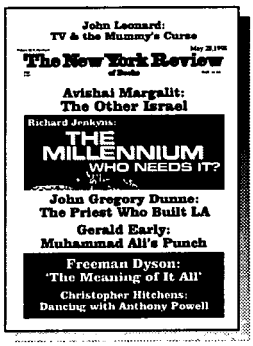

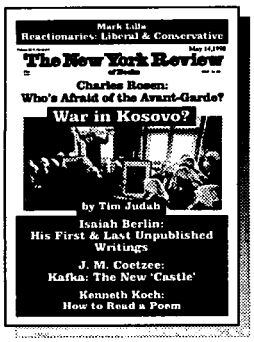

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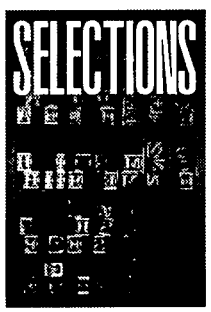

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The Asian Crisis

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